FILES MAGAZINE SPOTLIGHT ON

THE SUPERHEROES FILES

SUPERMAN & SPIDER-MAN ON SCREEN

THE SUPERHEROES ON SCREEN FILES

FILES SERIES EDITED BY HAL SCHUSTER

THE

SUPERHEROES ON SCREEN

FILES

SUPERMAN AND SPIDER-MAN

BY: ED GROSS

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two super friends.

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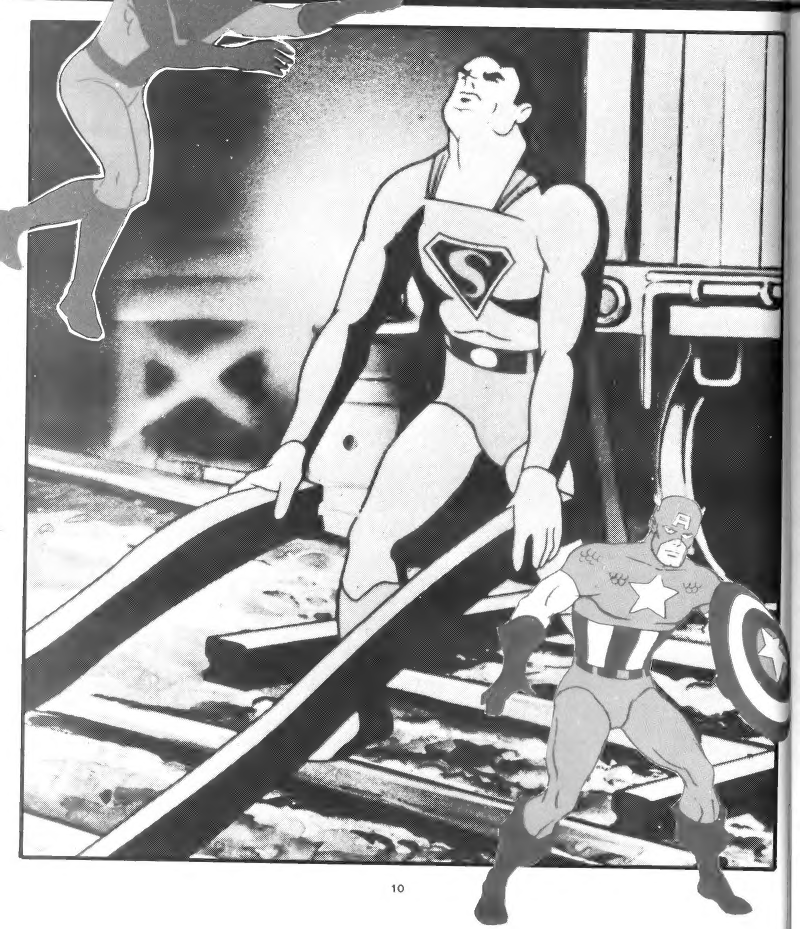


ON SCREEN

INTRODUCTION

It was with a certain amount of excitement that I glanced through **Variety**'s Cannon Films supplement. Certainly there were the usual announcements for the new Chuck Norris and Charles Bronson movies, as well as the typical exploitation pictures the company has become famous for. Yet amidst the tried and true were announcements for cinematic versions of Spider-Man,Captain America and, of course, Superman.

To be perfectly honest, it's **Superman IV** that I'm most looking forward to. I guess this can probably be attributed to the fact that the Man of Steel really is the grand daddy of all super heroes, no matter who has come or gone since his creation.

Virtually every child has, at one time or another, sat in awe of his exploits, and there's little doubt that this tradition will continue for many years to come. As Leslie Newman, one half of the screenwriting team responsible for the first three films in the series explains, "He's one of the basic American legends. He's our version of King Arthur. Superman isn't just a comic, it's a myth."

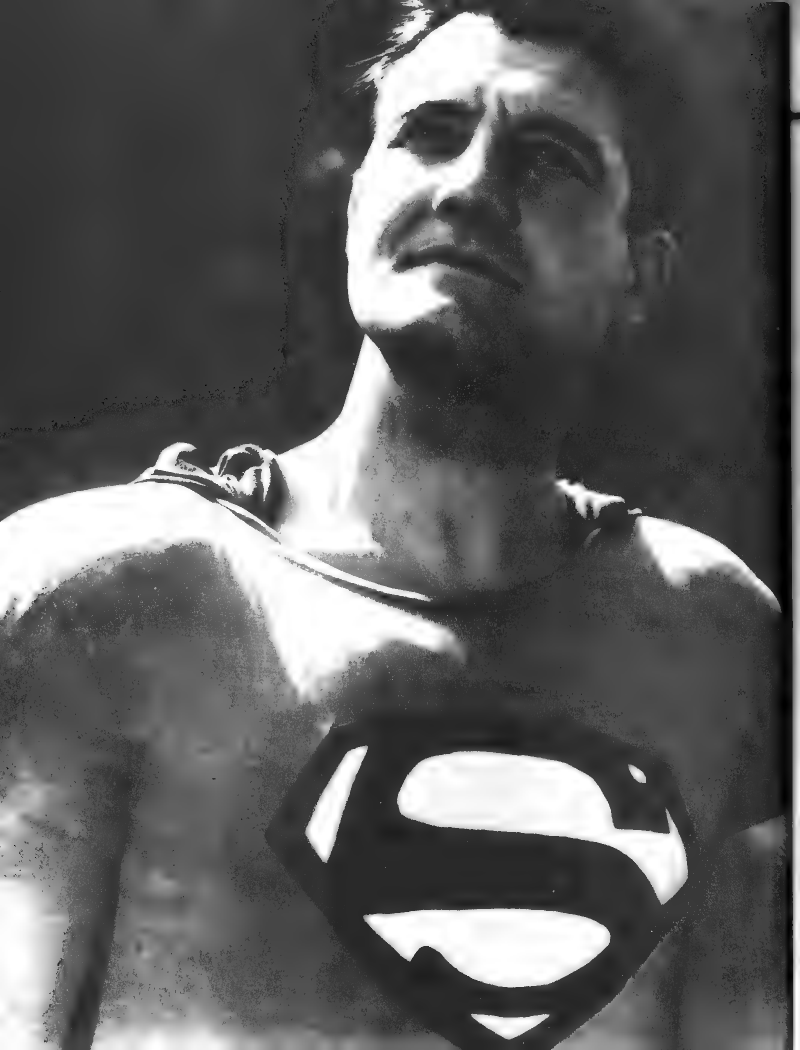
And seemingly an immortal one at that.

The modern Superman films have touched audiences around the world, just as the earlier television and serial incarnations did decades ago. For this reason, we're proud to continue our coverage of the Man of Steel in this and upcoming volumes of **Super Heroes File Magazine.**

This time out we're presenting a candid interview with David and Leslie Newman, as well as looking at **Superman — The Movie** and continuing our episode guide for the television series. Next time we'll take a look at the sequel and the serials **Superman** and **Superman Vs. Atom Man** and take a look at the new **Superman IV.**

Also up this time out is our continuing coverage of Spider-Man, and next time we hope to present an interview with Nicholas Hammond who portrayed the webslinger on the CBS television series, and continue our coverage of the new Spider-Man movie.

Now, secure your cowls and fasten your capes. It's show time.



SUPERMAN

ADVENTURES OF

SUPERMAN

EPISODE GUIDE

1951 SEASON CREDITS

Producers..... Robert Maxwell, Bernard Luber
Associate Producer..... Barney H. Sarecky
Assistant Directors..... Nate Barragar, Art Hammond
Art Directors..... Ernest Fegte, Ralph Berger
Cameramen..... Clark Ramsey, William Whitley
Sound Engineer..... Harry Smith
Sound Cutter..... Barton Hayes
Film Editor..... Al Joseph
Make-Up..... Harry Thomas
Wardrobe..... Izzy Berne
Casting Director..... Harold Chiles
Dialogue Director..... Stephen Carr
Props..... George Bahr
Special Effects..... Danny Hayes, Thor Simonson

CAST

Clark Kent/Superman..... George Reeves
Lois Lane..... Phyllis Coates
Jimmy Olsen..... Jack Larson
Perry White..... John Hamilton
Inspector Bill Henderson..... Robert Shayne

Episode Number Seven
The Birthday Letter
Written By Dennis Cooper
Directed By Lee Sholen

CAST

Cathy Williams.....Isa Ashdown
Slugger.....John Doucette
Mrs. Williams.....Virginia Carroll
Cusack.....Paul Marion
Maria Douvail.....Nan Boardman
Marcel Douvail.....Maurice Marsac
Mr. Perkins.....Jack Daly

A young paraplegic girl named Cathy Williams wants nothing more than to meet Superman, and she does just that after her life is endangered. It seems she's accidentally overheard a message from a member of the underworld. Knowing of Cathy's desire to meet Superman, an overweight thug dresses up as the Man of Steel in order to gain her trust so that she will tell him the message. Needless to say, the ruse fails and the day is saved by the "Real McCoy."

****

John Doucette, who here plays Slugger, appeared in such anthology shows as **Best In Mystery** and **Rebound** as well as secondary parts as Lt. Tom Gregory on **Big Town** (1954-55), Jim Weston on **Lock Up** (1959-61) and Capt. Andrews on **The Partners** (1971-72), his most recent role. Nan Boardman is best known for her involvement with one of the longest-running shows in the history of television, the Lutheran Church's Missouri Synod produced **This is the Life**, where she portrayed Mrs. Fisher for many years.

Episode Number Eight
The Mind Machine
Written By Dennis Cooper and Lee Backman
Directed By Lee Shalom

CAST

Lou Cranek.....Dan Seymour
Curly.....Ben Welden
Dr.Edward Stanton.....Griff Barnett
Senator Taylor.....James Seay
Al.....Harry Hayden
Carl Wagner.....Frank Orth
John Hadley.....Steve Carr
Bus Driver.....Lester Dorr

Crime chieftain Lou Cranek has a problem: a trial which is about to begin could, theoretically, put him away for the rest of his life. He happens upon one Dr. Edward Stanton, who has invented a deadly psycho-television beam which destroys the mind. Cranek forces him to use his invention

against the testifying witnesses before they reach the stand. Last up is Lois Lane, who is his next intended victim. This proves to be a major mistake as it brings the Man of Tomorrow quickly to the rescue.

****

Dan Seymour was best known as a radio emcee who went on to do television. He emceed both the radio and tv versions of **Sing It Again** until he was replaced by perrenial tv host Jan Murray in 1951, as well as both versions of **We, The People** (1950-52), the very first show regularly simulcast. For less than one month he also emceed **Where Was I?** (1952). He went on to play another shady character as Ferrari, **Casablanca**'s black marketeer (1955-56) and made two further appearances during the first season of **Superman**, in Episode Thirteen ("The Stolen Costume") and Seventeen ("The Runaway Robot"). Ben Welden would become a regular **Superman** heavy while Steve Carr may well have appeared in more episodes of the show than anyone except the cast regulars! Harry Hayden appeared on **The Stu Erwin Show** (1954-55) while Frank Orth portrayed Inspector Faraday on **Boston Blackie** (1951-53) and Capt. Sam Box on **The Brothers** (1956).

Episode Nine
Rescue
Written By Monroe Manning
Directed By Thomas Carr

CAST
Pop Polgase..... Houseley Stevenson, Sr.
Inspector D. K. Sims..... Fred E. Sherman
Stan Hocker..... Ray Bennett
Lafe Reiser..... Edmund Coff
Harry Hansen..... Milt Kibbee

Lois Lane goes to investigate a mine disaster and accidentally becomes trapped in its midst. Time is rapidly running out both for the reporter and a miner who are falling victim to the deadly coal gas. Superman burrows through the ground, and brings plenty of air for the trapped people.

****

Fred Sherman played Burt Purdy on **Cimarron City** (1958-60). This is the only episode that Monroe Manning wrote during this first season although he would come back to write the opening episode when the series returned in 1953, "Five Minutes to Doom."

Episode Ten
The Secret of Superman
Written By Wells Root
Directed By Thomas Carr

CAST
Dr. H. L. Ort..... Peter Brocco
Rausch..... Larry Blake
Mrs. Olsen..... Helen Wallace
Herman..... Joel Friedkin
The Cook..... Steve Carr

In an attempt to destroy the Man of Steel, Dr. Ort captures Lois and Jimmy and uses mind altering drugs to give Superman amnesia. Superman pretends that it actually works, until he is able to capture Ort when he least expects it.

****

Steve Carr made another of his frequent appearances during this episode. During the first season he appeared in every episode except the first, the seventh, the ninth, the eleventh through fourteenth and seventeenth through twentyfirst and the twentyfourth, still putting him in a full ten different stories in different roles. Joel Friedkin has already appeared in "A Night of Terror," Episode Six, making this his second appearance.

Episode Eleven
No Holds Barred
Written By Peter Dixon
Directed By Lee Sholem

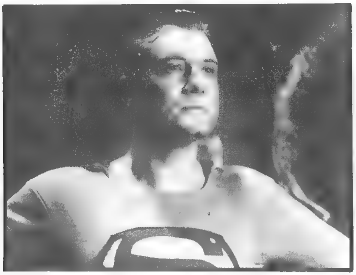
CAST
Wayne Winchester..... Malcolm Mealey
Bad Luck Brannigan..... Richard Reeves
Sam Bleaker..... Richard Elliott
Mortimer Murray..... Herburt Vigran
Swami Ram..... Tito Renaldo
Crusher..... Henry Kulky

A syndicate wrestler uses a hold which paralyzes his opponents. Clark Kent decides to give challenger Wayne Winchester some defensive moves to win the match, and, naturally, it pays off.

****

This episode is one of the few that truly downplays the Superman character to focus instead on Clark Kent. Frankly, it's a very welcome change of pace. There's some excellent character interplay between Clark and Lois.

Richard Reeves went on to play Mr. Murphy on **Date With the Angels** (1957-58). Oddly enough, another **Superman** veteran, Maudie Prickett, went on to play Mrs. Cassie Murphy! Henry Kulky portrayed Max Bronski on **Hennesy** (1959-62) and was already involved in the longest running part of his career, Otto Schmidlap in **The Life of Riley** (1949-58) when he took a break to assay this role on **Superman**. Bob Vigran briefly portrayed Ernest Henshaw on **The Ed Wynn Show** (1958-59).



Episode Twelve
The Deserted Village

Written By Dick Hamilton and Ben Freeman
Directed By Thomas Carr

Dr. Oscar Jessup..... Fred E.Sherman
Mrs. Matilda Tazey..... Maudie Prickett
Peter Godfrey..... Edmund Cobb
Alvin Godfrey..... Malcolm Mealey
Miss Walton..... Ann Tyrrell

Lois and Clark go to Clifton-By-The-Sea, where most of the population had departed because of a sea monster which has supposedly been sighted. The hoaxsters who remain have found a deposit of hydrozite, utilized in the construction of hydrogen bombs. It's their intention to mine the substance, and then auction it off to the highest bidder.

****

This is the episode in which the actress who went on to appear in **Date With the Angels** appeared. Maudie Prickett, besides appearing as Mrs. Cassie Murphy, also played Mrs. Ratchett on **The Tammy Grimes Show** and Rosie on **Hazel** (1961-66). Ann Tyrrell seems to be a satellite of Ann Sothern. After appearing in **Superman**, she went on to become Vi Praskins in the Ann Sothern vehicle, **Private Secretary** (1953-57) and then when all of the stars of that series transferred over to fill out **The Ann Sothern Show** (1958-61), she went along to become Olive Smith. Fred E. Sherman, who here appeared as Dr. Jessup had previously appeared during this season in the role of Inspector Sims in Episode Nine ("Rescue") while Malcolm Measley had appeared prominently in Episode Eleven.

Episode Thirteen
The Stolen Costume
Written By Ben Freeman
Directed By Lee Sholem

CAST
Johnny Sims (T-Ball)..... Norman Budd
Candy Meyers..... Frank Jenks
Connie..... Veda Ann Borg
Ace..... Dan Seymour
Uniformed Officer..... Bob Williams

A criminal named Ace, who has a thing against reporters, breaks into Clark Kent's apartment where he and Connie, his moll, discover the mild mannered reporter's Superman suit hanging in his closet. They steal the uniform and eventually try to bribe Kent, stating that they won't reveal his secret identity only if Ace is given full reign over Metropolis. Superman does not negotiate with the criminals though and he quickly takes back his costume, stranding the would-be blackmailers atop an icy peak in the Arctic, where, upon attempting an escape, they fall to their certain deaths.

****

This is perhaps one of the most violent episodes of all, and proves that Superman isn't as pure and wholesome as he's usually portrayed. His retribution is downright ruthless, and is an interesting touch on an otherwise almost too pure character. Frank Jenks portrayed Uthas P. Garvey on **Colonel Humphrey Flack** (1953-54). Bob Williams is another radio veteran who emceed **Double or Nothing** until 1953. Actually, he was assistant emcee to Bert Parks.

Episode Fourteen
Mystery In Wax
Written By Ben Peter Freeman
Directed By Lee Sholem

CAST
Madame Selena Dawn..... Myra McKinney
Andrew Dawn..... Lester Sharpe

A sculptress who isn't quite all there adds a unique suicide wing to her gallery in which she predicts the suicides of several important members of the Metropolis community, among them Perry White. Naturally, Superman intervenes to save the day.

****

An unusual but unnotable episode. This is one of the ones that Steve Carr wisely missed. In fact, none of the guest cast appeared in any other episode.

Episode Fifteen
Treasure of the Incas
Written By Howard Green
Directed By Thomas Carr

CAST
Pedro Mendoza..... Leonard Penn
Chief of Police..... Martin Garralaga
Dr. Cuesta..... John DuVall
Professor Laverra..... Hal Gerard
Taxi Driver..... Juan Rivero
Don Anselmo..... Steve Carr

After discovering a damaged Peruvian tapestry, Clark, Jimmy and Lois embark upon a South American expedition, where they get involved with death and intrigue at the hands of a gang of criminals.

Episode Sixteen
Double Trouble
Written By Eugene Solow
Directed By Thomas Carr

CAST

Dr. Albert Fisher/Schulmann..... Howard Chamberlain
Colonel Redding..... Selmer Jackson
Doktor Rudolf Albrecht..... Rudolph Anders
Jake..... Jimmy Dodd
Count von Kieben..... Steve Carr
Madame Charpentier..... Steve Carr
Kreuger..... John Baer

Superman travels to Europe in search of a cache of radium which was stolen and given to former Nazis who wish to rise in power again. The mystery thickens with a pair of identical twins who provide alibis for each other to cover their involvement with the caper.

Episode Seventeen
The Runaway Robot
Written By Dick Hamilton
Directed By Thomas Carr

CAST

Rocko..... Dan Seymour
Mousey..... John Harmon
Chopper..... Russell Johnson
Marvin (XP127Y4)..... Robert Easton
Horatio Hinkle..... Lucien Littlefield
Uniformed Officer..... Herman Cantor
Hero, the Electronic Robot..... Itself

In a plot which would later be redone ad infinitum, Professor Horatio Hinkle creates a mechanical man which is captured by crooks and utilized in their criminal activities. Superman, of course, neutralizes the threat and everything returns to normal.

****

Russell Johnson is known to virtually anyone who has ever watched television, or at least the character of The Professor (Roy Hinkley) he portrayed on **Gilligan's Island**(1964-67 and frequent reunions since!) is. He also assayed the role of Marshall Gib Scott on **Black Saddle** (1959-60). Lucien Littlefield was Mr. Beasley on **Blondie** in 1957. Dan Seymour also appeared in Episodes Thirteen and Eight.

Episode Eighteen
Drums of Death
Written By Dick Hamilton
Directed By Lee Sholem

CAST

Johnson/Legvoo..... Harry Corden
Masters..... Leonard Mudie
Berharier..... Milton Wood
Miss Kate White..... Mabel Albertson
Dr. Simon Jerrod..... George Hamilton
Laughing Voodoo Drummer..... Smoki Whitfield

While Jimmy and Perry are in Haiti, Perry's sister is kidnapped by a tribe following the instructions of a mysterious witch doctor who has just "appeared" in their community. Superman eventually proves that this "doctor" is actually a white guide in disguise.

****

Mabel Albertson played in several television series in the 1950s and early '60s. Her most lasting roles were as Henrietta Patterson on **That's My Boy** (1954-59), as Mrs. Whiting on **Those Whiting Girls** (1955-57) and as Irene Brady on **The Tom Ewell Show** (1960-61). Harry Corden was a regular on **The Kelly Monteith Show**. And if George Hamilton requires an introduction, then you just haven't been paying attention to the latter half of the Twentieth Century!

Episode Nineteen
The Evil Three
Written By Ben Peter Freeman
Directed By Thomas Carr

CAST
Macey Taylor..... Rhys Williams
Colonel Brand..... Jonathan Hale
Elsa..... Cecil Elliot

Perry and Jimmy go off on a fishing trip and check into a motel, despite claims from the locals that the place is haunted. Once settled in, they're confronted by an insane trio who plot to get rid of them any way they can.Superman makes only a token appearance.

****

This episode is unusual for what doesn't happen. Superman does not dominate the action of the story and in fact makes only a nominal appearance while the characters normally shoved into the background, his friends and coworkers, are given an opportunity to take center stage.

Episode Twenty
Riddle of the Chinese Jade
Written by Robert Maxwell
Directed By Thomas Carr

CAST
Lu Sung..... Paul Burns
Harry Wong..... Victor Sen Yung
Lily Sung..... Gloria Saunders
John Greer..... James Craven

A priceless Oriental jade figurine is stolen from an elderly shopkeeper in Chinatown. Superman investigates the mystery, and discovers that the thief is actually the man's future son-in-law.

****

This episode illustrates the biggest complaint that the Oriental acting community has against the Hollywood studios, the networks and the entire film community: most Oriental roles are portrayed by white actors/actresses. This not only lessens the realism of the portrayals but limits the opportunities for Orientals. Otherwise this was an unremarkable episode. Director Robert Maxwell utilized the screenname of "Richard Fielding" for this episode.

Episode Twentyone
The Human Bomb
Written By Whitney Ellsworth
Directed By Lee Sholem

CAST
Bet-a-Million Butler..... Trevor Bardette
Conway..... Dennis Moore
Deputy Inspector Hill..... Marshall Reed
Henchman..... Lou Lubin
Officer Riley..... Ted Ryan
Receptionist..... Aline Towne

A major robbery is about to take place, with the only possible hitch being the potential interference of Superman. To prevent this, one of the criminals kidnaps Lois and threatens to blow them both up if the Man of Steel gets involved. To save his friends, Superman has to apply his brains as well as his brawn. He does, and everything ends well.

****

Trevor Burdette played Old Man Clinton on **The Life and Legend of Wyatt Earp** from 1959 until 1961. Marshall Reed was Inspector Fred Asher in **The Lineup** (1954-59) and alternated with Michael Reed in playing the part of John Willard on **The Waltons** (1978-81).

Episode Twentytwo
Czar of the Underworld
Written By Eugene Solow
Directed By Thomas Carr

CAST

Ollie..... Paul Fix
Tommy Dinelli/policeman..... John Maxwell
Luigi Dinelli..... Tony Caruso
Postello..... Roy Gordon
Movie Director Carr..... Stephen Carr

Clark and Inspector Henderson are enroute to Hollywood to serve as advisors on a crime expose film, when they receive a death threat. It seems that said film would expose a certain criminal, and he doesn't want to be put away for life. Superman plays guardian angel and the film is brought to a successful conclusion bringing an end to the criminal.

****

It is interesting to note that there is a character in the show that is a director named Carr and the show is directed by a director named Carr. Plus the part is assayed by an actor named Carr!

Paul Fix played the hapless Marshall Micah Torrance on **The Rifleman** from 1958 to 1963. It often seemed that the marshall could accomplish nothing without the help of his friend.

Episode Twentythree
The Ghost Wolf
Written By Dick Hamilton
Directed By Lee Shalom

CAST

Sam Garvin..... Stanley Andrews
Babette DuLoque..... Jane Adams
Jacques Loliver..... Lou Krugman
Railroad Engineer..... Harold Goodwin

While investigating a story in the timberlands of Canada, Clark, Lois and Jimmy discover some mysterious cases of arson and claims of a terrifying wolf which seems to appear from and disappear to nowhere. Superman enters the scene and helps unravel the mystery.

****

Stanley Andrews was The Old Ranger on **Death Valley Days.** While he is still the best remembered actor to assay the part, the gentleman who followed him is better known for other roles, Ronald Reagan!

Episode Twentyfour
Crime Wave
Written By Ben Peter Freeman
Directed By Thomas Carr

CAST

Walter Canby..... John Eldredge
Nick Marone, Public Enemy No.3..... Phil Van Zandt
Big Ed Bullock..... Al Eban
The Professor..... Joseph Mell
Sally..... Barbara Fuller
Tony, the Barber..... Bobby Barber

Frustrated by various criminal activities, Superman declares a one man war against crime. In response, a master criminal, who is not pleased with his plans possibly being altered, plots the destruction of the Man of Steel. Superman lives to fight crime another day.

****

This was the last regular episode of the series for some time. Bobby Barber was a regular ensemble member in many shows in the old **Abbott and Costello Show.** Al Eban played Doc on **Hawaii Five-0.**

Episode Twentyfive and Twentysix
The Unknown People
Theatrical Release as Superman and the Mole Men
Written By Robert Maxwell
Directed By Lee Sholem
(SEE VOLUME ONE FOR COMPLETE CAST LISTING)

Silsby. A small town in Anywhere U.S.A., which has no major claim to fame except that, now, it is the site of the world's deepest man made oil well. Both Clark Kent and Lois Lane have been sent from the Daily Planet to cover the opening of the historic event, before Silsby slips back into obscurity. And yet, events unfold which insures this town a place in history for all eternity.

The next morning, after the festivities have concluded, two creatures, half humanoid and half mole, emerge from the oil well, slowly taking in their surroundings and waiting for their eyes to adjust to the sun. Apparently the well drillers broke through the crust of the earth and entered the realm of the mole people, who have now come up to investigate this strange and alien world which they never knew existed.

Slowly the pair began to explore Silsby in a peaceful manner, and their appearance actually looks more threatening than it is. Everything they touch begins to glow, as though contaminated by radiation. The townspeople panic, and it isn't long before a posse, led by Luke Benson, a hateful bigot, starts to hunt the mole men down.

The earth dwellers are cornered on a bridge by the group. One escapes, while the other is shot by Benson and falls from the bridge to his apparent death. But Superman swoops down, catches the creature and places it on safer ground.

While the Man of Steel confronts Benson and his men, the mole man who has escaped gathers his brothers and they begin searching for their missing comrade. They're about to destroy Benson and company with a laser rifle, when Superman gets in the path of the ray, thus protecting the humans even though, in actuality, one wonders if they really deserve the protection. He returns the wounded mole man to them. They in turn, go back to their underground world, and seal the well up behind them.

"It's almost as if they're saying 'You live your lives, and we'll live ours.'" Lois ponders.

******

Despite the fact it aired on television as the two part "Unknown People," the original version of this story was a theatrical release which marked George Reeves' debut as Superman.

Superman and the Mole Men works on a variety of levels. First of all, it's not only a top notch Superman adventure, but also a superb exercise in science fiction as well. There's action, human drama and humor, with a healthy dose of poignancy added for good measure. Whether it was an attack against McCarthyism and the "red menace" isn't really clear, but now, thirty years later, it can easily be seen as such.

In his debut, George Reeves is wonderful as Superman, bringing just the right heroics to the character and proving why, to many people, he owns the part. Virtually every member of the supporting cast is fine, particularly the lovely Phyllis Coates as Lois Lane, certainly a predecessor for Margot Kidder's portrayal three decades later.

There's an underlying intelligence to Robert Maxwell's script, and Lee Sholem's direction is right on the mark, easily making the audience believe that the Man of Steel truly exists.

DAVID & LESLIE

NEWMAN

INTERVIEW

David and Leslie Newman own the fattest cat I have ever seen in my life. It's cute as hell, but fat nonetheless.

Amazing what things come to mind when you're writing the introduction to an interview.

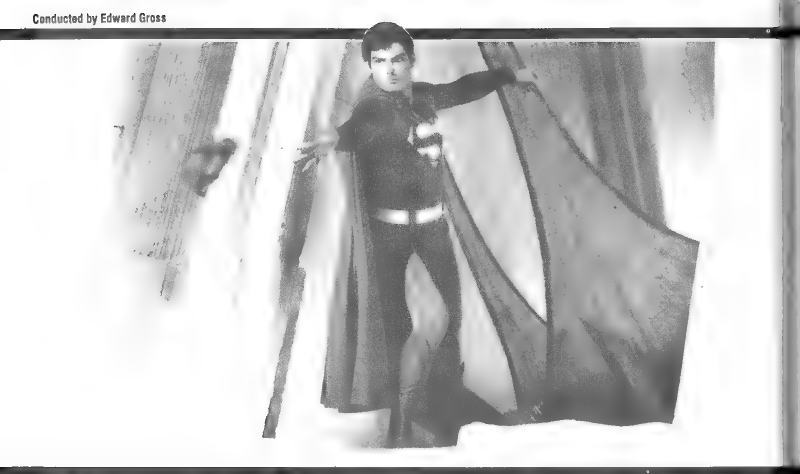
Actually, sipping Diet Coke with the Newmans is quite an experience. I mean this is the couple who touched millions of people with the screenplays for Superman one thru three. In essence, they played a more significant part in revitalizing the Man of Steel for modern audiences than people usually realize. It was the Newmans who let us believe that Superman could fall in love and sacrifice his powers for the woman he loved, as well as letting us believe that a man in red and blue tights could be accepted as "real" (obviously Christopher Reeve had quite a bit to do with that as well).

No matter what happens with **Superman IV**, it was they who helped lay down the groundwork for what's to follow.

Once invited into their Manhattan apartment, one is instantly put at ease by their candor and good humor. These are people who have not been spoiled by success and have remained very down to earth. The conversation flows smoothly from their beginnings as a romantic and professional team, to such anecdotes as the fact that for a brief moment Muhammud Ali was considered to play Superman.

Departing from their home two hours later, I feel as though I've made two new friends, certainly no mean accomplishment for a Saturday afternoon.

And in New York yet!



Q: To start off, how did the two of you get together in both a professional and personal sense?

DN: One of them proceeded the other by decades.

LN: We collaborated on two children first (all laugh).

DN: We met in college. I was a junior and Leslie was a sophomore at the University of Michigan, and at that time a friend of mine said, "There's this girl coming up from Chicago, and you've got to meet her." We met, and the rest is family history. Then we got married two years later, when I graduated, and our first child, Nathan, was born when I was in grad school We finished there, and came here when I went to work at **Esquire**. We had another child, Kathryn, our daughter, and many years went by in which Leslie was raising children...

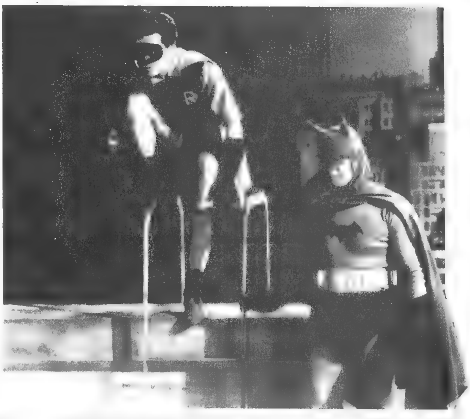
LN: In the fifties it wasn't a question of what you were going to be, but rather that you were going to marry someone and what were they going to be?

DN: It's her theory on the changing concepts of Lois Lane.

LN: Yes (laughs), I wasn't going to have anything to do with that woman and her dippy hats who wanted to give it all up for the picket fence and five kids.

DN: Anyway, I started working with **Esquire** and got involved with a guy named Bob Benton. We became partners and wrote a lot of magazine things, books and then we started writing movies. We wrote **Bonnie and Clyde**, that was our first film, and then we did **It's A Bird, It's A Plane, It's Superman; Oh Calcutta** and a lot of movies. During the twelve years I worked with Bob, Leslie had written a novel which was published by Simon and Shuster in the early seventies. At one point Benton and I did a film called **Bad Company**, which was the first film he ever directed, and after he finished shooting it he was editing forever. He never likes to let go of the movie, and I had time on my hands. Leslie and I had been talking for years about an idea we thought would make a great movie, which was based on a lot of the people we knew because we used to spend time in the south of France in the summers and we'd seen a certain kind of crazy girl who would wander all over Europe. So we wrote a movie called **The Crazy American Girl**, which was about a girl in the south of France, and I directed it in France. That was the first thing we had ever done together. Benton and I did some other things, but by then our careers began to go in different directions because Bob got involved with **The Late Show**, and then somewhere in there the Superman movies began. The original deal on **Superman** was that we were supposed to do one and two back to back (they were going to shoot it all at once) for a lot of financial reasons, which made a lot of sense on paper but wasn't feasible at all.

The original idea was, and I can't remember how this got worked out, Benton and i were going to write **Superman I**, and Leslie and I were going to write **Superman II** simultaneously. But since we were going to write these two movies with all the same characters, we all had to begin making up the stories and the characters together, so we went to Europe where the producers were based. The guy who was supposed to direct at the time was Guy Hamilton, who did some of the best James Bond movies. Bob Benton and I started working on one, while at the same time Leslie started making notes for number two. What happened was we wrote the first draft of one, and Bob got his next picture, which was **Kramer Vs. Kramer**, so after the first draft he couldn't be involved on Superman. At that point Leslie shifted over to one, then the two of us did that one. We also did **Superman II**, only about a tenth of which



was shot by Richard Donner, and then they ran out of money. Then when Richard Lester came on to do two, which was about two years later, he said, "You've got a great opportunity to make something better," which is something writers don't usually get. So working with Richard Lester we did two, and then we did three. And that's the basic chronology of how that all happened.

LN: The making of those films was a wonderful experience. There were so many friendships made, and it was a very good time.

DN: The interesting thing is that the Salkinds had no idea that I had anything to do with the Superman musical.

Q: To be honest, I really know very little about that one.

DN: That's very simple. Benton and I were freelancing magazine articles, and two guys, Lee Adams and Charles Strauss, the composers who had written Bye Bye Birdie and a lot of great shows, went to lunch with us and they suggested we write a musical. That didn't happen, but we had a wonderful time. Our son Nathan was eight years old at the time and he was reading comic books, and Leslie came out of his room and said, "You know what would make a great musical?" And she held up a Superman comic book. And I thought, "Wow, what a great idea." Benton liked it, and then Adams and Strauss liked it, so we wrote this musical called **Superman**, which Hal Prince produced and directed. It was a wonderful show, which took a year to get on as Broadway shows do. We were in trouble in Philadelphia, we got it whipped into shape and opened in New York in March of 1966, and got the greatest reviews you've ever seen in your life. We thought we had a smash hit...there was a line at the Alvin Theatre, now the Neil Simon Theatre, which went around the block, and we thought, "Here it comes guys. Get me that house in San Jose." We went off for a week thinking we had made it big, but what happened...well we had our own theories as to what happened. Benton called it "Cape lash," as opposed to backlash. The **Batman** television show had come out on television at the same time, and one of the things that happened, I think with some hindsight....

LN: It was a very different approach to the subject than we took in the films.

DN: It was a musical. It was fun, but it wasn't camp. We took the character very seriously, though it was playful. He sang and danced...we're not talking about the Bible here anyway, but it was a lot of fun. Jack Cassidy played the villain, a guy named Bob Holliday played Superman. But then one or two things happened. One, I think, was the Batman show, just because it was a time for pop art, a lot of magazine coverage had Batman, Superman and Andy Warhol's Campbell Soup as though it was all part of the same phenomenon, and I think people said, "Why should I pay twelve bucks a ticket when I can watch Batman for nothing?" The other thing, despite the reviews and everything like that, people kept coming up to the box office and saying, "I want fifteen tickets for my son's birthday party on a Saturday matinee."

LN: Nobody wanted tickets at night because they thought it was a kid's show. It was a very sophisticated kind of humor in which the attempt to destroy Superman was done through psycho-analysis.

DN: There was this wonderful sequence we call the brain-washing scene, where the evil scientist asks why he dresses up like that. Is it a need to be noticed? (all laugh).

LN: But this was hardly stuff for five year olds. People just had this notion that it was for kids. It really was ahead of its

time.

DN: We were selling out matinees and going empty at night. They changed the advertising and used sexy girls, but nothing worked. After three months, one day in July, it just closed and that was the end of that. Then I forgot about super heroes and many years later the Salkinds came to us, and they had no idea that I had done this show. I began to think that there was something in fate that this red caped creature would fly into my life every ten years and save my life, which he did.

Q: Was the character of Superman himself something that has appealed to you?

DN: Oh yes, endlessly. It still does.

LN: It's one of the basic American legends. David's always said that it was our King Arthur. People asked why we were doing a movie about a comic book hero, but nobody thinks it's odd to do a movie or musical about King Arthur or Robin Hood. Superman isn't just a comic, it's a myth, and it contains elements of so many of the basic myths...the God who walks among men.

DN: The notion of a God who walks among men disguised as a man occurs in every mythology, and there are biblical connotations in this legend as well: a father who says, "I will send my only son to earth to save mankind!" We all know where we've heard that story before, but it has such resonance.

LN: The loneliness of the God-like figure.

SN: All the notions of flying and super powers appear time and time again in all kinds of mythology, plus for us there's always been the endlessly fascinating modern psychological Freudian ramifications of that character, which is this totally schizoid personality.

LN: It's a triangle.

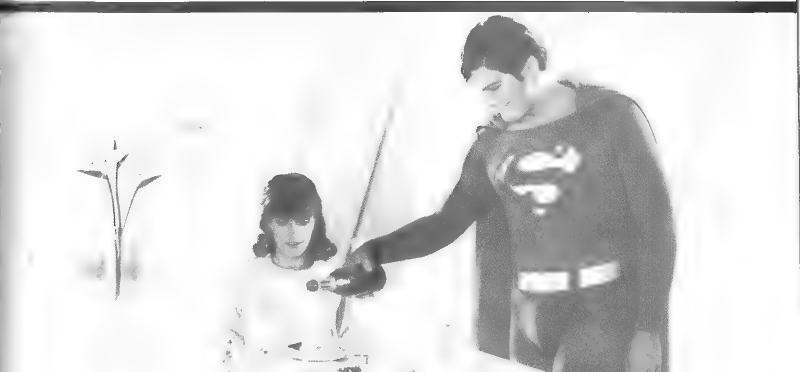
DN: One of our favorite things about that character is, and always has been, the classic split personality. There's Jekyll and Hyde, and Clark Kent and Superman. The thing that never occured to anybody, as much as it occured to us and we finally dealt with it in **Superman III**, was that it always seems to us that they didn't like each other. The Id and the Superego battled each other all the time. Then there's the Lois aspect. She loves Superman, but doesn't like Clark. Clark loves her and is jealous of Superman, so he doesn't like Superman.

LN: In the love scene, which is one of our favorites, she says, "But if it wasn't for him, I wouldn't have met you," and it's all so confusing because she's just found out the truth.

DN: We did three of those movies without ever losing our fascination with that myth and character. Part of the fun, also, is taking that myth and plunking it into the world we live in today. What if we lived in a world where Superman could fly by our window right now? It's the same world, except there's this guy who can fly and walk up the side of a building.

LN: What would it be like for him? But in today's world, which is why you have him looking at a phone booth and having to go into an alley because the phone booths have changed.

DN: There are a lot of super heroes who are going to have a lot of lasting meaning to people, but I don't think any of them comes close to Superman. Siegel and Shuster did that, and we were the happy recipients to take that ball and run with it a little bit more, and now somebody's doing **Superman IV** and we feel very curious as to what that's going



to be about.

LN: We have done basically what we wanted to do. I was fascinated by Lois and her relationship to both Clark and Superman, and the nature of Lois. She reflects changing attitudes towards women. I couldn't bear the Lois of the fifties, but then it was pretty unbearable being a woman in the fifties.

DN: When Lois started in the comics in the forties, she really was tough...basically Roselyn Russell.

LN: When you write film, it helps to have somebody to write for. It doesn't matter if they're alive or dead. It's just a notion in your mind, although it's not likely to be that person in all probability, but it's who gives you the germ. So in this case, she didn't want to give it all up and settle down. She was spunky.

DN: Whereas this Lois Lane of the fifties thought, "If he'd only marry me I could settle down."

LN: And she always got herself into dumb scrapes, not because of ambition but because of stupidity.

DN: The Lois in our Broadway show was more like that. She actually sang a song "What I've always wanted," including a picket fence. Well that's not what Margot Kidder's always wanted. That Lois is the Lois of the 70's.

Q: Were your original scenarios very different than the final results?

DN: We've never had anything but wonderful experiences with the Salkinds, and that includes **Santa Claus**, and I'll work with them forever.

LN: They treat writers wonderfully, and that includes the way they treat writer's work.

DN: Not only that, but we were present on the set. I was present on the set of **Santa Claus** all through production, and we were present on the sets of the Superman films. They're just tops. I remember when we saw the rough cut of **Superman II**, I thought, "Jesus Christ, 98 percent of what was on the screen was exactly what we had written." It was a lovely experience because you don't always get that. I did a movie called Sheena, which I wish, to this day, I'd taken my name off of because I have about four lines in that movie. Another writer came in on it. It was a horrible story in which I stupidly left my name on it out of simple greed because I was protecting my points. Well it was points of nothing, as it turned out. Plus which it's embarassing that my name is on it because it isn't my work. This was opposite to all the Superman films and Santa Claus.

LN: Even during periods of the shooting when we weren't there, if Richard felt he wanted to make some kind of changes he would call and ask what we thought. It wasn't a case of somebody just going ahead and doing whatever they felt. A lot of the things about making up Superman plots, is that the dynamics is: think of a situation that is impossible, no matter what you do, to get out of...now think of a way to get out of it. It's really a one-two. Like, give up your powers and become mortal, and now the three super villains have arrived.

DN: Or two missiles going in opposite directions! That all came about because Guy Hamilton, who was then going to be the director, had seen Army documentary footage of the Cruise Missile where it goes across the earth in thirty seconds. He was in love with that idea of seeing the Grand Canyon turn into the Pacific Ocean from the rocket's point of view zipping across the earth. That's how the whole notion of the XK-12, or whatever it was, came about, and then the double bind of how is he going to stop both of

them? That's what's a lot of fun.

LN: It's really tough to figure out a double bind, and then figure out the solution to the unsolvable.

DN: I'm happy in a way that Larry Konner and Mark Rosenthal are doing **Superman IV**, because they're good and it's interesting to see a fresh approach to...

Q: So you have no qualms about not being involved with the new one?

LN: No, because we really feel as though we did what we wanted to do. We've always believed that the only reason to do a sequel is if you have something more to say, or something more to delve in to.

DN: When we finished **Superman III**, every one of us, starting with Chris, said "No more Supermans."

LN: There really was a moment of a lot of hugging after the premiere, with tears in the eyes and a lot of "God it's been wonderful."

DN: It turns out we meant it, but Christopher didn't (all laugh). First of all he's getting five million dollars, which always helps convince you, and also Christopher said there was really something else he wanted to do with the character. We're written out on that character. And once it went from the Salkinds to Cannon, it just wasn't our gang any more.

Q: I hear they're bringing Gene Hackman back as Lex Luthor.

DN: A different type of Luthor, from what we understand. But it'll be a different more serious type of Luthor.

Q: I don't mind that much, because I like the more serious approach.

LN: I think there's a fine line. You can have humor, but you can't...

DN: Apparently this Luthor is going through major personality changes. But who knows?

Q: In the first film, it's stated that it's forbidden for Superman to interfere with human history...

DN: You're going to ask about the ending of one.

Q: You betcha! Was that the original ending?

LN: No.

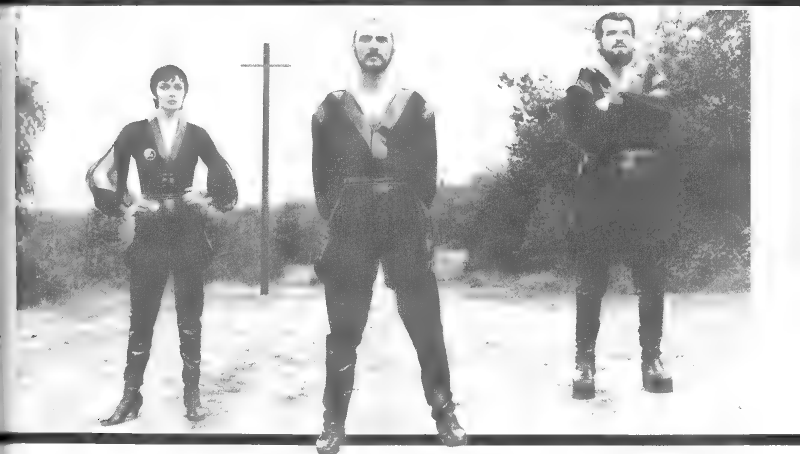
Q: Could you tell me what it was originally supposed to be?

LN: Originally it was supposed to be a cliffhanger.

DN: What happened originally, is when we put the scripts together, in order to get Gene Hackman...the Salkinds got in trouble once because they made The Three Musketeers, but it was so long that they cut it in half and made two movies out of it, but they didn't pay the actors for two movies, so a lot of people hit the fan and there was a tremendous lawsuit and contracts were renegotiated and the Salkinds got a reputation for being naughty guys for a while. Well when we did one and two, and the original idea was that they would be shot back to back, they said "Instead of putting 'The End,' just write a sort of transitional scene so it will look like one movie." We said, "Look, these are professional actors, and they're going to know that something is up when they get a four hundred page script." But at that time there was a cliffhanger, because at one point, for some silly reason, we thought part one would close and a week later part two would open.

LN: We were not thinking about the realistic lapse in time.

DN: So the original idea was that Superman would throw one of those nuclear rockets into space, and that's what cracked open the Phantom Zone to release Zod, Ursa and Non. I loved that, too, because in order to save one thing he inadvertently created another problem for earth.



LN: It was a great idea, but unfortunately you had the time lapse of two years.

DN: Richard Lester said, "Nobody is going to remember how part one ended." So that's when we came up with the Eiffel Tower scene and the terrorists. The cliffhanger, which I now remember quite vividly, had the villains being freed, with us not knowing if Superman was alive or dead because of the nuclear explosion. The villains yelled, "Free, free!" That later became the beginning of **Superman II**.

Q: So in this case Lois would have still been dead?

DN: The Lois death scene came afterwards. That was before the idea of reversing time and the whole thing. There are two copouts in those movies in terms of people saying, "How come you're not supposed to do that and you did that?" That was the first one, and the second one was in **Superman II** when we say that all is lost, and then he gets his powers back thanks to the green crystal.

LN: But I don't think of that as a copout. I think that's "magic." Christopher always called the green crystal the "Tube of Prell."

Q: So bringing Lois back was simply just a way to end it.

DN: Yes.

Q: Is there anything particular about Christopher Reeve's portrayal that sticks out in your mind?

DN: I think some of the best work he's done as an actor is in **Superman III** with the evil Superman character. It's wonderful the way that happens in degrees. I just think it's his best work. There's that tiny little scene with Lana Lang where he starts to come on to her instead of going to get the bridge. By the big fight in the auto graveyard I think he's just great. It was the first thing shot in that movie too. They started with the hardest part, but he really knows the character. Whatever happens on **Superman IV**, he's not going to mess around with the character. We're going to be doing a non super hero film together.

Q: What's that?

A: It's a romantic comedy called **Letters To Michael**, which I wrote and hope to direct, which is about a guy who advertises on the subway for a wife and gets eight hundred marriage proposals. It's based on a true story, and it's something Chris very much wants to do.

Q: Konner and Rosenthal mentioned to me that they were trying to get back to the epic quality of number one. Do you agree with the lighter approach the films were taking as they went on?

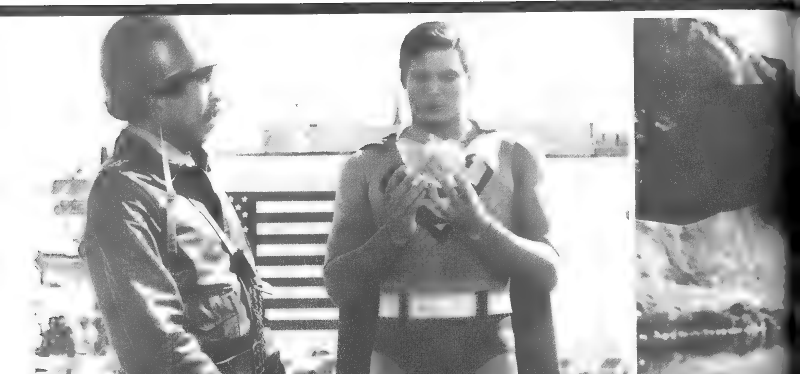
DN: I don't really believe that they were. Our favorite is **Superman II**. My feeling about one is...

LN: We had so much back story to get out of the way.

DN: I think one is three different movies. There's the Krypton part of one, which you had to tell because that's the legend, although there's something which seems pretentious about it to me.

LN: On the other hand, you really don't have time to get to know the individual characters on Krypton as characters, so you can't make Krypton have any reality.

DN: Then there's the Smallville stuff, and that's a kind of a John Ford looking...there's all those landscapes, Glen Ford, farmers and all that stuff which is another movie. And once you get to Metropolis, that's another movie. To me there was an unavoidable clash of styles in one, although the film works wonderfully. Two, to us, was just a dream to do because you didn't have to go into all that stuff, and we recapped the original under the credits. And I love those three villains. I think two works the best.



LN: The love scene even made us cry.

DN: I know what these guys mean by "epic," but to me **Superman** II was a fairy tale. First of all it was a fairy tale about love, second of all it had the greatest threat because it was three against one with a slam bang finish.

LN: The thing we love most is the intercutting, the pacing of the stories.

DN: Making those villains up is something we were very proud of. What happened on three, is that it's the Gus Gorman part of it which Christopher felt didn't belong. His character he loved.

LN: But let's be realistic, when you have someone like Richard Pryor the studio wants more than you might necessarily want to do.

DN: I'm not copping out for it because we're responsible but we sat around in London with Richard Lester, and we began by saying, "How are we going to top two?" When we were in Niagra Falls shooting **Superman II** in Niagra Falls, Leslie and I were sitting in a restaurant in this hotel, and there was something about Niagra Falls being spoken about in terms of a place for young couples to go. I had been to my own class reunion two years before, and we started talking about the fact that there was no where else to go with the Superman/Lois love story.

LN: We just didn't want to do the same thing again.

DN: We were talking about Frank Capra movies, and about going back home again and you can't go home again, and the whole Lana Lang/Superman going back to Smallville idea began while we were doing number two. We had that for a while. Richard Lester said, about eight months later, "I want to do something about computers. I don't know what, but I think that's what's happening in the world today, and **Superman III** ought to reflect that." We thought about computers and what we came up with is that they're running our lives, we don't know how and that we're somehow threatened by them. Then one night Richard Pryor was on the Johnny Carson show, and Carson asked him what he was doing next. Richard replied, "I'm waiting to see the next Superman movie. Boy do I love Superman, and I'd do anything if I could be in one fo those pictures." At that point lightbulbs went off, so we created that character for him. Once you get Richard Pryor, obviously you're getting lighter and I think Christopher feels that what happened on three was not that Richard Pryor was in it, but that the balance was tipped in Pryor's favor or too much towards the Gus Gorman part of that story. One thing about that movie that's structurally strange is that we never brought those two stories together until very close to the end of the movie. In Superman II the three stories combined in the middle. In this one they combined, but the Gus Gorman character didn't really come into contact with Superman until the end of the movie, so a lot of what Richard did was without Chris, and a lot of what Chris did was without Richard. If you talk to Chris he'll tell you that the scene which distresses him is Gus Gorman going off the building with the table cloth around his neck. I still think it's funny. It's not epic, and it is lighter and it is comedy. I don't want to apologize for it, but it did go more in that direction and I hope when they say they want to pull it back, they don't pull it back too much. I think there's something devilish about Gene's portrayal of Lex Luthor.

LN: It's a fine line in how you approach it. When we did the first film, you could not have somebody saying, "Up, up and away." We could not have someone say, "Look, it's a

bird...It's a plane..." Or change in a phone booth. It would have been horrendous. It's a funny kind of balance you have to pull off.

Q: When I say lighter, I'm talking about a phone booth being knocked over in the big battle of **Superman II** and some guy is still talking on the phone and laughing and then in **Superman III** when the figures in the traffic lights actually start fighting. Now that, to me, is being too light.

DN: If you look at Richard's films, he loves slapstick and gags, and we wrote for the director. We had a great time doing the opening scene where one disaster leads into another one. We wrote the traffic light business, and it still makes me giggle. It is comical, and maybe some people feel it's too much. Some people have a certain amount of rigidity. We feel, probably more than most people do,...Janet Maslin's review in **The New York Times** said, in essence, "Why don't they leave well enough alone? Why do they try to do new things with that character?" What she's saying is that each movie should go on doing the same exact thing.

LN: Then they write a review saying, "They do the same old thing. Why don't they do something different?"

DN: Then you get those **Rocky IV** reviews saying, "I think I've seen this movie four times."

LN: Plus which we were hitting a problem with Lois. It was silly to do the same thing. The Lana Lang romance is not on the scale of a Lois romance, it's on a lighter scale as well.

DN: The trickiest thing about these kind of movies is you walk on a very thin line concerning tone. One false move and you're into camp or you're into Saturday morning cartoons. It's very tricky, and I suppose we haven't always been right, but it's much harder than people think. It's not the Penguin going around saying, "Hah hah, Batman, I'll get you and your little friend." It's a lot easier writing **Ghostbusters** than a super hero movie, and I'm really curious about the Spider-Man movie and how they're going to handle it.

Q: Were the reviews for **Superman III** as positive as they had been for the first two?

DN: No, but I'll tell you that the best reviews we got on three were the best reviews we've gotten, in a way. Richard Corliss from Time magazine loved it.

LN: One doesn't mind negative reviews, if they're the type that you can learn something from. If they're constructive.

DN: Sure the mixed reviews bothered me, but I've had a lot of movies open and close with all kinds of reviews, so I think I know how to live with that. It performed well and that's really the bottom line. People are entitled to their opinions, and I'm not going to pass the buck. That is our movie, and that's the way we wanted it to come out. Maybe we were wrong...

LN: What interested us may not have been what interested other people as much. To us the notion of somebody loving Clark Kent and thinking of Superman as just a nice person was interesting, but other people might want to see somebody in love with Superman.

DN: Again, I didn't learn anything from those critics, except that it didn't work for many of them. In any case, on **Superman III** the only thing that I think we all felt afterwards, and we still feel, is that we've taken it as far as we can, and now the torch will be passed to Konner and Rosenthal.

THE MOVIE

SUPERMAN

On the planet Krypton, Jor-el asks the Council of Elders to pass judgement on the three Kryptonian criminals Zod, Ursa and Non. It had been their intention to create a new order, with Zod as supreme commander.

A unanimous vote of guilty casts them into the Phantom Zone, a prison on another dimensional plane whose sentence lasts for eternity.

"You will bow down to me, Jor-el," declares Zod as they disappear, "and one day, so will your heir!"

In a moment, they are gone.

Some time later, the council dismisses Jor-el's claim that Krypton will explode to be nothing more than melodramatic nonsense. They note that any attempt to instill fear into the populace will be deemed a criminal act. Jor-el gives his word that neither he nor his wife, Lara, will leave the planet.

He does load his son Kal-el into a small rocketship and launches him into space just before the planet explodes. Accompanying the child are memory crystals which educate his subconscious mind on the histories of various alien planets, including Earth, where the rocket is headed.

The rocket crashes in Smallville, where it's found by Jonathan and Martha Kent. The passenger, they discover, is unharmed, so they decide to adopt him as the child they never had but always prayed for. Jonathan is somewhat hesitant until, while changing a flat, he's saved when Kal-el catches their truck as it slips off the jack.

Years pass, and a teenaged Kal-el (now Clark Kent) is having problems coping with the strange abilities he possesses.

"One thing I do know, son," says Jonathan, "is that you are here for a reason."

This simple statement seems to cheer Clark up, and he gains a more playful attitude about things. But then, out of the blue, Jonathan has a massive coronary, and falls lifelessly to the ground.

"All those things I can do," chokes Clark to Martha at the funeral, "all those powers, and I couldn't even save him."

Several nights later Clark is awakened from a deep sleep by "something" calling out to him. Going to the barn he discovers a glowing green crystal, and somehow comes to grips with at least a part of his past and future. He knows he has to leave Smallville, though he doesn't know why. The crystal is telling him that it can lead to the solution of problems which have plagued him all of his life.

The quest takes him to the North Pole, where the crystal miraculously "creates" the Fortress of Solitude. A holographic image of Jor-el informs Clark that this fortress is a place of learning and understanding, and together they will learn the truth of his heritage, his true destiny in life. The education begins, and lasts for twelve consecutive years.

Finally an adult Kal-el emerges from the Fortress adorned in the red and blue uniform of Superman. his time, it seems, has come as he soars into the air.

In Metropolis Clark is hired as a reporter for the Daily Planet, where he meets Perry White, Jimmy Olsen and Lois Lane. Upon leaving the building with Lois that afternoon, they are forced into an alley by an armed mugger. Clark acts terrified, and Lois attempts to disarm the mugger. A shot is fired and Cark catches the bullet, while slumping to the ground at the same time. The frightened mugger runs off, and a concerned Lois bends down to see if Clark is still alive. A moment later he opens his eyes, noting that he must have fainted. Disgusted, Lois walks off, while a smiling Clark throws the caught bullet to the ground.

In his underground cavern, Lex Luthor shows his cohorts, Otis and Miss Teschmacher, a Daily Planet headline which states that the U.S. will be testing two nuclear missiles. He is quite pleased, revealing that the government will actually be helping him (albeit unwittingly) pull off both the crime of the century and the greatest real estate swindle in history.

The work day comes to an end at the Daily Planet, with Lois having to turn Clark down for a dinner as she's taking a helicopter to meet with Air Force One and the president. Dejected, Clark leaves the building while she goes to the helicopter pad on the roof.

Disaster strikes immediately, as the helicopter gets tangled in some cables and crashes against the side of the building. The pilot is knocked unconscious, the craft is teetering on the edge of doom and Lois is hanging on for dear life. Her grip slips, and she begins the plummet to the ground. Suddenly she's caught in midfall by Superman.

"Easy miss," he smiles, "I've got you."

"You've got me?" she demands. "Who's got you!"

The helicopter falls from the building, but Superman catches it with one hand, lowering both it and Lois to the roof, and, thereby, safety.

Everyone, from the technicians on the roof to the crowd on the streets below, is amazed by this flying marvel.

"Who are you?" Lois asks softly.

"A friend."

He soars off, and a stunned Lois passes out.

Superman's first night in Metropolis is a busy one. Leaving the vicinity of the Daily Planet, he stops a cat burglar, catches a group of crooks, rescues a cat from a tree and saves Air Force One after a bolt of lightning destroys one of the engines.

Watching a late newscast of the Lois Lane rescue, Luthor is intrigued by this Superman. Then again, he explains, it only seems fair that the crime of the century be coupled with the challenge of the century.

The next day, Perry White informs his staff that he wants Superman to go with the Daily Planet like peanut butter

goes with jelly. During this meeting, Lois finds a note which reads, "Tonight at your place...a friend."

"'A friend'?" she reads aloud. A smile crosses her lips.

That night Superman arrives at her penthouse apartment, feeling that an interview would make her readers understand him better. They change and fly around town together, it rapidly growing apparent that there is a romantic attraction between them.

Eventually he drops her off at home. Seconds after he soars off, there's a knock at the door. It's Clark, stating that they had a date for the evening. A dazed Lois absent mindedly nods her head and goes to get her coat. For a moment he wants to reveal the truth, but backs down at the last second.

Luthor reads Lois' interview with Superman in the Daily Planet, and, through extrapolation, he deduces that fragments from Krypton would have drifted to Earth, and that the radiation on the Kryptonite would be intense enough to kill the Man of Steel.

After obtaining a piece of the stone, Luthor fakes an accident to stop a military convoy carrying the two nuclear missiles. The coordinates are altered to fit the criminal mastermind's grand designs.

At the Daily Planet, Perry White informs Clark that Lois and Jimmy are in California, investigating a story about somebody who's buying thousands of acres of worthless land at incredible prices. During their conversation, Clark picks up an ultra high frequency message from Luthor stating that in half an hour a poison gas pellet will release fatal gas in air ducts throughout the city, effectively annihilating half the population of Metropolis.

Superman follows the signal and arrives at Luthor's underground headquarters.

"All right, Luthor," he demands. "Where's the pellet.

"Somewhere...in the back of my mind," he laughs. "Just an idea I was toying with."

"Is that how a diseased mind gets its kicks, by planning the death of innocent people?"

"No, by causing the death of innocent people.'

Luthor reveals his plans to have a nuclear missile detonate on the center of the San Andreas Fault, which would cast the west coast into the ocean and make his "worthless" land into the new California. Meanwhile, the nuclear missiles are launched by the government and control is immediately lost by them.

Superman is shocked to learn that there are two missiles, or "double jeopardy," as Luthor notes. Lex says he could use his detonator, but refuses.

Even using his X-ray vision, Superman is unable to locate it. Finally he realizes that Luthor is sitting on a lead trunk.

"You diseased maniac," says Superman, "did you really think you could hide it from me by encasing it in lead?"

He throws Luthor half way across the room.

"Don't touch that," warns Luthor.

"I'll mold this box into your prison bars," he replies arrogantly.

The box is opened, and the Man of Steel is suddenly stunned with weakness from the Kryptonite stone attached to a chain. Luthor picks it up and wraps it around his neck.

"You don't even care where the other missile is headed," groans Superman weakly.

"Of course I do. Hackensack, New Jersey."

Superman is thrown into the built in pool, presumably to die.

"Lex," says Miss Techmacher, "my mother lives in Hackensack."

Luthor just shakes his head in mock sadness.

A powerless Superman promises to stop the Hackensack missile first if Miss Teschmacher helps him. Making sure that Luthor isn't in hearing distance, she agrees and pulls him from the pool, removing the Kryptonite. A moment later, with his full power returned, he takes off after the missile.

Catching up with the first one, he changes it's trajectory (sending Luthor, who's watching on radar, into a fury) and sends it into space where it will detonate harmlessly. As he does so, however, the second missile strikes the San Andreas Fault. An earthquake erupts instantly, causing havoc all over the west coast.

Superman flies into the fault itself, and starts to repair it by hand; putting it back into its proper setting. From there he soars all over the area, attempting to save lives and stop disasters, including the potential derailment of a train and a flood from a destroyed dam. He manages to save Jimmy (unceremoniously dropping him off in the middle of a highway), but Lois' car is caught in a crevice and the ground starts to close up again, filling the vehicle with dirt and gravel, and eventually suffocating her.

The destruction ended, Superman then finds her car and hoists it out of the ground. Savagely he rips the doors off its hinges, and gently removes her body, placing it on the ground. For a long time, over the course of several hours, he stands vigil over her, praying for some sign of life, even though he knows there won't be.

Thunder rumbles in the sky, and tears stream down his face. He shakes his head slowly.

"NO!" he screams, his face a mask of pain, anguish and anger. Superman streaks into the sky where he hears several voices in his head.

"My son," says Jor-el, "it is forbidden for you to interfere with human history."

"One thing I do know, son, is that you are here for a reason."

"All those powers, all those things I can do, and I couldn't even save him."

Determined, he streaks off into space and continues to fly around the earth at unimaginable speeds. The planet's rotation slows, and then starts to reverse itself. Time slips backwards, and all the destruction is undone, including Lois' death. He sets Earth back to its proper rotation, and lands next to Lois' stalled car.

They stare deeply into each other's eyes, and are about to kiss when Jimmy calls out to them. Smiling (forcing one?) Superman says there's something he has to do, and flies off.

At the state prison, Superman drops off Luthor and Otis.

"This country is safe again," says the warden, "thanks to you, Superman."

"Don't thank me," he smiles, "We're all on the same team."

With that he takes off and, shortly thereafter, reaches outer space where he locks into Earth orbit, patrolling space as a great white would patrol its domain.

* * * * * *

Shortly before the release of **Superman—The Movie** in December of 1978, there was much skepticism regarding how good it could possibly be. After all, filmgoers had grown far more sophisticated than they had been during the days of obvious wires and actors lying on glass tables. Add to this the fact that **Star Wars** and **Close Encounters Of The Third Kind** had recently taken special effects to a level they had never been before.

Starting with opening day, any fears of inadequacy were dispelled. It was obvious that **Superman** had worked, and easily touched upon the child in each member of the audience. The special effects, particularly the flying sequences, were extra-ordinary, the direction on the mark and the characterizations stronger than they had ever been. Most noteworthy among the latter was Christopher Reeve, who seemed to have stepped off the comic book page, with enough human qualities to make him an identifiable hero.

The Krypton sequences, admittedly, aren't terribly exciting for the simple reason that the characters aren't delved in to as they won't be around very long. Nonetheless, Marlon Brando is surprisingly convincing as Jor-el, and Terence Stamp has a terrific time chewing up the scenery as General Zod. In fact, this brief glimpse afforded us of the villains only whets our appetite for **Superman II**, which features them in all of their completely villainous power and glory. Probably the worst thing about the Krypton scenes is Kal-el's rocket, which looks more like a Christmas tree decoration than a space ship.

Once we move to Earth and familiar surroundings (then again to many city dwellers Smallville may have looked as alien as Krypton did) the proceedings take on an air of normalcy attributed to many old fashioned farm films, right down to the childless farmers who find an abandoned baby and decide to adopt it. Things are still moving slowly at this point, but it's all necessary in supplying the background history for the character. Some nice acting here and good drama as well, even though it doesn't really deal with the guy in the red and blue tights.

Next up is Metropolis, where things really pick up. Right away we're immersed in Superman lore as mild mannered Clark Kent goes into the Daily Planet building and gets a job as a reporter. Here we meet editor Perry White, cub reporter Jimmy Olsen and ace writer Lois Lane, who can't spell for a hill of beans.

Jackie Cooper and Marc McClure, as Perry and Jimmy respectively, are pretty much as one would expect, but Margot Kidder is terrific as Lois Lane. This is definitely a woman of the 80's, determined not to give it all up for a married life and willing to take chances to get what she wants.

Reeve, amazingly, creates two distinct characters between Clark Kent and Suprman, and you really do start to believe that they're two different people. This is in direct contrast to George Reeves (with all due respect) who put on a hat and glasses and nobody knew who he was. Also, you really can sense the spark between him and Kidder which helps make everything that much more believable.

The essence of the plot (wiping out California to make way for a new west coast) is pure camp, but ingenious nonetheless. Gene Hackman as Lex Luthor walks the fine line between humor and drama, and as much as he makes you laugh you also believe that beneath that veneer of sardonic humor is perhaps one of the most dangerous people on the planet. This is someone you believe could do some serious damage to Superman, and would be happy to take over at least part of the world ("Australia," he tells Zod in the sequel). In fact, Luthor puts many of James Bond's deadliest foes to shame, making them seem mentally deficient by comparison.

While David and Leslie Newman's contributions have been discussed earlier, director Richard Donner deserves much of the credit. This film could have easily fallen into the completely camp style of the old **Batman** TV series, but he kept it as serious as possible without ever forgetting to keep the proceedings fun. It's obvious that he had an epic vision for this myth's translation the big screen, and he's treated it with the utmost respect and love. No moviegoer could ask for anything more.

The ads for **Superman — The Movie** proclaimed that "You'll believe a man can fly," and they were absolutely right.

MEDIC
TER

SPIDERMAN

Stan. The Man. himself!

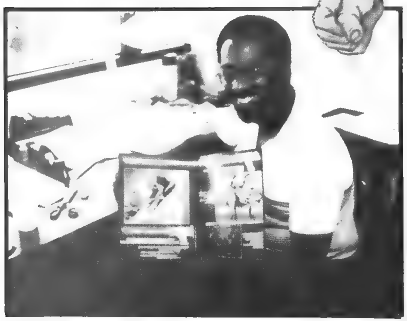
Above: An unsung hero of the coloring dept
Below: Scott Shaw busily at work!

THE ANIMATION

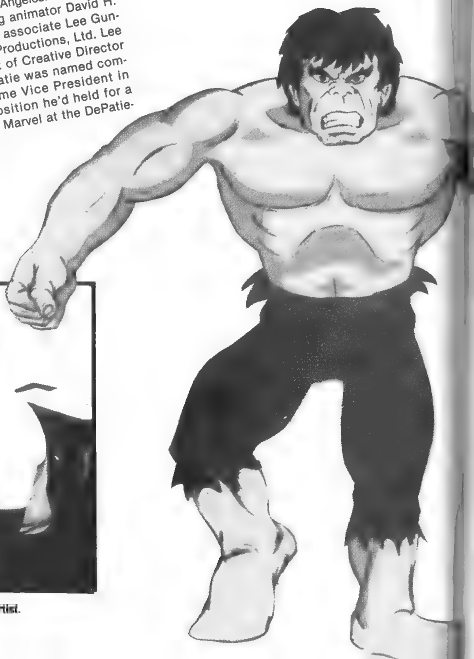
MARVEL PRODUCTIONS

By Robert Strauss

In the summer of 1980, Marvel Entertainment Group president James E. Galton and Marvel comic Publisher Stan Lee, the creator of such beloved comic book characters as The Fantastic Four, Thor, the Hulk and Spider-Man, traveled west from their New York corporate headquarters to establish an anumation studio in Los Angeles. In conjunction with the Emmy and Oscar-winning animator David H. DePatie and his longtime production associate Lee Gunther, Galton and Lee formed Marvel Productions, Ltd. Lee remained in Los Angeles at the post of Creative Director for the new cartoon company. DePatie was named company President and Gunther became Vice President in charge of Production, the same position he'd held for a number of years prior to coming to Marvel at the DePatie-Freleng animation studio.



Larry Houston, animator and comic book artist.



The primary reason why Lee and Galton wanted to start a production company was that they had been repeatedly disappointed with the ways in which other producers had portrayed the Marvel Comics characters in cartoons, live-action TV and feature films, and they felt they could do a more accurate job of bringing their characters to the large and small screen. Now, after four years, it's debatable whether or not Marvel Productions has yet achieved that goal. What is not open for question is the fact that, in those four short years, Marvel has established itself as one of the most successful suppliers of cartoon series to syndicated and Saturday morning network broadcasters, right behind the two giants of the industry, Hanna-Barbera and Ruby-Spears Productions. For anyone who watches cartoons or works in the animation field, Marvel has also developed a reputation as a house of quality, where more time, inventiveness and personal care is lavished on each product than at any other major television supplier.

Marvel's first project was a syndicated *Spider-Man* animation series. Ironically, this is probably the closest the company has come to capturing the spirit of a Marvel Comic. Since that time, Marvel has produced the highly-rated *Spider-Man and His Amazing Friends* and *The Incredible Hulk* for NBC, *Dungeons and Dragons* and *The Muppet Babies* for CBS, *G.I. Joe, Jack London's White Fang*, *Transformers* and *Galavants* for syndication and numerous specials (their Dr. Seuss adaptation, *The Grinch Grinches the Cat in the Hat*, won an Emmy), commercials, comedy series and special projects. The company is also actively engaged in developing live-action projects based on the Marvel superheroes, for film and television. From an initial staff of about 18 employees, the company now has approximately 140 in-house workers and 20 to 25 freelance people employed regularly on the outside.

In March of this year, a fire gutted Marvel's original production office. Operations were moved to a large, ultra-modern new facility, trimmed in Spider-Man red and blue, that rises, like a modular Attilan, out of a busy industrial district of Los Angeles' San Fernando Valley. It was here that Margaret Loesch, a veteran Hanna-Barbera production coordinator and former head of children's programming for NBC, came to replace David DePatie as President of Marvel Productions when he retired last spring. Loesch's arrival, along with the new facility, herald a new committment to bring the Marvel comics characters to film and television with as much fidelity to the original source material as possible. For Stan Lee, the ongoing dream that he's nurtured since the 1940s when he began writing comic books, the dream of a world of fantasy and imagination coming ever-closer to life, is once again moving forward.

"I think, in the beginning, we were a little too naive. Coming out here, we learned that you cannot exert as much control as I'd hoped you could when you work with the networks," Lee told me in his corner office in what everyone at Marvel refers to as "The New Building". Like all other offices, Lee's is unfinished: the doors have no handles, no permanent decorations have been fixed to the walls, the air conditioning never works quite right. But Lee himself is a marvel to behold: trim and wiry in his crisp new jeans and half-buttoned oxford shirt, this bright and energetic man, whose books I devoured voraciously for the better part of my childhood and who is probably old enough to be my ah...grand-uncle, is nobody I'd relish running a 100-meter dash against.

"It's really the network that exerts the control," Lee continued. "You want to sell to the network, you do it the network's way. As an example, it wasn't my idea to have Spider-Man as part of a team on the animated show with Iceman and Firestar, it wasn't my idea to have a funny little dog running around with them or for them to be living in a rooming house with Aunt May or for them to yell 'Go for it!' whenever they go into action. I wanted to do Spider-Man just the way he is in the comic books, but the network thought differently. The networks want an homogenized blend of characters for each show. Their feeling was, in order to get the girls to watch the show, Spider-Man had to have a girl partner.

"Now, the one thing about Spider-Man is that he's a loner. God knows there are girls who read the Spider-Man comic books. But according to the network's demographics people, there had to be one girl, one boy, one dog and so forth. I'm not saying they're wrong. I'm sure they know their audience. But it does make it difficult to give the same spirit and the same appeal to a product that it has in the comic book form. I'm saying that it's not the way I would have wanted to do it."

Lee went on to explain that his complaints about network interference are not unique, that everybody from Aaron Spelling on down says the same thing from time to time. He then praised the competence of most network executives, and made clear that he understood that they based their decisions on what has and has not worked for them in the past, on demographics, research and audience surveys.

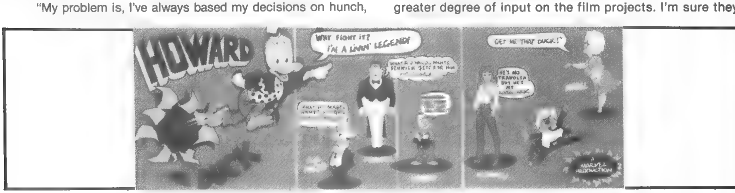
"My problem is, I've always based my decisions on hunch, instinct. I operated by the seat of my pants. I said to myself 'If I like this, there will be a lot of people out there who'll like it.' I always felt that if research and demographics are that infallible, then there would never be a show that wasn't a hit. Because by the time a show gets put on the air, you can bet it's researched and demographiced to death."

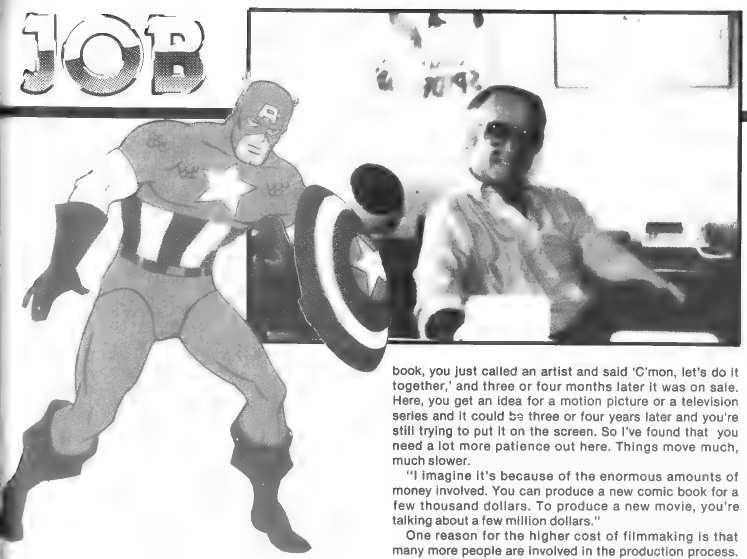
Despite this and the other forms of interference that are the bane of all creative people who work in the broadcasting industry, Lee loves working in the film business. He describes his duties at Marvel Productions: "My main responsibility is to get some motion pictures and TV series going, based on the Marvel characters or on any new characters we create. I'm concentrating primarily on live-action, but I also try to help out as much as I can with the animated projects. I talk with film studios and producers. In the beginning, I narrated the *Hulk* and *Spider-Man* cartoon shows and set the formula for the way they would work. I don't actually write or story edit any of the shows because I don't have the time."

So far, Lee has struck a deal with Cannon Films to produce a live-action *Captain America* feature, and another one with King's Road Productions for *Dr. Strange*. *The Fantastic Four* has been developed and then shelved by several studios, as has *The X-Men*. Famed independent producer Roger Corman currently holds the rights for a *Spider-Man* film, two networks have expressed interest in a live-action *Daredevil* series, and Willard Huyck and Gloria Katz, the crack screen-writing team responsible for *American Graffiti* and *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, are working on a script for *Howard the Duck*.

Keeping track of all this activity, and constantly brainstorming and promoting new concepts gives Lee little time to keep abreast of developments in the Marvel Comics universe. "I try to talk to Michael Hobson (Marvel's Vice-President in charge of Publishing) and Jim Shooter and the various editors as often as I can. Basically, even though I'm listed in each magazine as the Publisher, I'm really not involved in the day-to-day operation of the comic book company. I don't even have time to read all of the books as they're published, to my lasting regret. I did go to the original meetings with Mattel on the *Secret Wars* project, but I left the rest of it to Shooter and the staff in New York.

"I wish the people involved with the comic books had a greater degree of input on the film projects. I'm sure they





wish they had more. But the logistics of it make it so difficult. They're in the East and we're out here in the West. I personally would like to call the guys in New York every time we have a new project, and I try to do that. Maybe if we were all together in the same studio, ti would be easier, but as a practical matter, it really isn't easy to work together on projects.

"If there's a movie in the offing, we do try to get some of the fellows in New York to write outlines or treatments for it. Very often producers want to use their own writers, but we do it whenever we can. We tried with *The X-Men*. Chris Claremont worked with the producers for awhile, and now I believe Roy Thomas and Gerry Conway are working with them. With Spider-Man, a number of writers at Marvel, as well as myself, submitted some outlines to Roger Corman. I don't know if he has yet decided what the story should be.

"It's our hope that we'll work in very close cooperation as much as possible with Marvel New York in the future. If we do a show, they'll do a book, and we'll incorporate their ideas with our ideas."

Lee went on to explain the differences that he's found exist between the comic book and film industries. "The biggest difference is that things were more instantly gratifying in the magazines. If you had an idea for a comic book, you just called an artist and said 'C'mon, let's do it together,' and three or four months later it was on sale. Here, you get an idea for a motion picture or a television series and it could be three or four years later and you're still trying to put it on the screen. So I've found that you need a lot more patience out here. Things move much, much slower.

"I imagine it's because of the enormous amounts of money involved. You can produce a new comic book for a few thousand dollars. To produce a new movie, you're talking about a few million dollars."

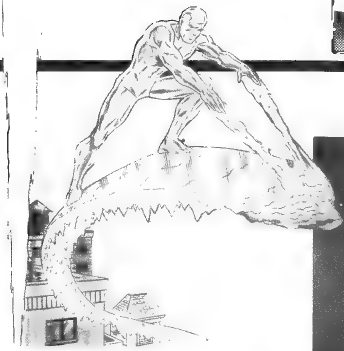
One reason for the higher cost of filmmaking is that many more people are involved in the production process. "On an animated cartoon, you have literally dozens and dozens of people who are doing storyboards, layouts, backgrounds, coloring, character design, scriptwriting, directing, producing. Then the actual animation is done overseas in Japanese, Korean and Belgian studios, by dozens of other people. For a comic strip, you have a penciller, an inker, scriptwriter, letterer, editor and colorist. You never have more than that.

"So it's a mass production line, just like any motion picture. It's a much more complex operation than doing a comic book. A comic book has approximately six panels to a page, times however many pages a story is. Whereas your average animated cartoon program, which lasts about 22 minutes, has got thousands of drawings. It's a different thing entirely.

"I find movie making and television producing enormously exciting. It's a big canvas. Whatever you do will be seen by millions of people, instantly. It has a big effect. I'm enjoying it very much, even though I do occasionally miss the comics.

"I am incredibly enthusiastic about the future because there is so much that we can do. We have so many ideas now, I don't know if we'll have time to develop them all. In all different directions: for network, syndication, cable, cassettes, features. Everything you could think of, we have ideas for ways to do it. I think this studio is going to become a very major force in animation, and may well go a few steps beyond that."

THE NEW

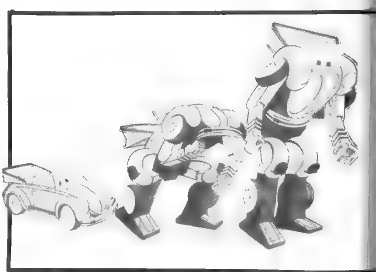


Perhaps the person most responsible for making Lee's predictions come true is Margaret Loesch, Marvel Productions' new President. She has the experience that comes from being on both sides of the fence: For five years she was director of children's programs at NBC, the person responsible for the network's Saturday morning cartoon lineup, and for five years after that she was in charge of programming at Hanna-Barbera, where she supervised creation and development, selling of product, show production and oversaw the writing staff.

"Why did I come to Marvel?" Loesch asks rhetorically. "It's not every day a company comes along and offers you the top job. It's a wonderful opportunity and challenge. I couldn't very well have turned to Joe Barbera at my last place of employment and said 'Could you move over? I'd like your job.' I also took this job because this company has an uphill battle. It's much smaller than Hanna-Barbera, it's only four years old, and it needed some fresh leadership, in the sense that the man who led it for several years was ready to retire.

"They have not been particularly successful in recent years at getting Marvel Comics shows off the ground. I am determined to get the Marvel characters out there in animation. I am a great fan of Marvel Comics and of Stan Lee. In fact, when I was at NBC we bought the *Fantastic Four* show that DePatie-Freleng produced. I'm working closer and closer with Stan all of the time. One of my goals is to get *The Secret Wars* on TV. I'm not so sure it's right for Saturday morning network, but however we do it, Stan will be consulted in the packaging and development of it. Additionally, we have a cable possibility which will feature Stan in live-action wraparounds, hosting some of our older cartoons. In addition, there are live-action, prime time shows I've asked him to develop new concepts which will be both animated shows and a new line of comic books.

"So I am really making an effort to get Stan Lee's touch more and more into the Marvel product. Thus far, I don't feel that the prior Marvel management was successful in bringing Stan into the operation and really utilizing him a lot. I think, frankly, that there was this very creative person and they didn't know what to do with him. The reason why, I believe, his comic books and his characters appeal to so many young people is that Stan is ten years old. His juices, his creativity is childlike, it has no boundaries. He's all over the place, has one hundred ideas a minute.



"He's very much in touch with what kids like and care about, not so much trend-wise as emotionally. He puts that in his characters, like the Silver Surfer, the lonely man without a country. He is absolutely in touch with people's sensitivities, and we've got to get that into the cartoons. It certainly was in his comic books.

"If I have a single fault to find with Stan, it's that he's too nice. Once I asked why the *Spider-Man* series didn't seem like the real thing. He said, 'Well, y'know, some people wanted it this way and other people wanted it that way. Gee, I didn't think it was right, but I wanted to give them all what they wanted.' Stan and Joe Barbera share this: they want to please the client, they want to do the right thing, sometimes to a fault. Sometimes, in trying to accomodate everybody, what they know to really be special gets lost in the evolution. But that's okay. My job is to get Stan's ideas on the screen and that's what I will do. Just set up a great sandbox for him, let him create and I'll sell it."

Along with her determination to keep Stan Lee's vision intact, Loesch also intends to build a bridge across the troubled gulf between creative people and network executives. "There is a great cry in the creative industry today that the networks are ruining our product, and there are a lot of examples of that. But having been at two networks for a total of ten years, and having been with a major producer, I think I'm a little more objective on the issue. If I make a single contribution to this industry, aside from increasing the quality of the product, I'd like it to diminishing that rivalry between broadcaster and producer. Because it's become counter-productive, and in some cases it's totally adversarial.

'WE (the producers) don't have air-waves. We must partner ourselves with something like a network or a syndicate that has the capability to broadcast our product. Marvel Comics is both the creator and to a large extent the broadcaster of its product, but our situation's totally different. Also, in the comic book world, if Stan got an idea and wanted to create a comic book, the company had the financial resources to pay for it.

"Producing television shows is incredibly expensive. We can't afford it, so the networks pay us. When someone pays for anything, they buy certain rights, among them the right to put what they want on the air. So there is a series of creative compromises that are made. Sometimes they're very good. I have seen, in my exprience, an idea greatly enhanced by working it through with the networks. The result was a stronger, better product. On the other hand, I've seen good ideas completely compromised because too many people's needs have been satisfied, the things got watered down and wound up bearing very little resemblance to what they started as.

"I think I understand the problems of network executives. I understand they buy a product for more than one reason. What they are primarily concerned with, in addition to the quality of a show, is the competitive positioning of that show so it will accrue the maximum potential audience. Also, when you're a broadcaster, you're responsible to answering to the public (such as the Action for Children's Television people, the largest of many groups that monitor the levels of violence on Saturday morning TV), as well as for meeting the needs of your own company financially. Sometimes, you can't always buy the kind of programming you want because of financial limitations.

"Knowing that, I think it both helps me give the network more of what they want, while at the same time, as a producer, it helps me to figure out ways of keeping the essence of what makes a concept or project work within the program.

Loesch went on to describe a bit of what she thinks the networks look for in a show. They tend to like shows aimed at the ten to eleven age group, since testing results have shown the younger children will watch what older children watch, but not vice versa. They want shows with equal boy-girl appeal. And they want shows that are very visual. Concepts should provide a lot of opportunity for sight gags, action and visual humor. Although dialogue is not altogether frowned upon (*The Smurfs* being a prime example of a successful dialogue-heavy show), the old animation rule of "show it, don't say it" is still very much in effect.

There are two other elements that Loesch feels are vital for a good show. "You don't want to get too preachy," she explained, "and yet, some of the best cartoons have some heart. It's nice to have some emotion and a little bit of feeling among the characters in a show. And everything should also be bigger than life. Storytelling is something everyone loves. We love to be swept into something beyond ourselves, to a place where our imagination can take over."

With that, Loesch directed my attention to a framed Samuel Johnson quote on her otherwise bare and unfinished wall. It read: "Babies do not want to hear about babies. They want to be told of giants and castles."

"That's what I look for in a program," Loesch said.

Dick Robbins and Bryce Maldek are two story editors at Marvel. Robbins is a veteran writer from the days of dramatic radio and live TV, who since 1972 has worked almost exclusively in the animation field, and Malek is a young man who used to work in Hanna Barbera's accounting department. It was Margaret Loesch who gave him his first writing assignment in 1980. Both Malek and Robbins came to Marvel in April of 1984, where they've been putting together the syndicated *Transformers* series ever since.

"It's based on a toy line," Malek says, "which a lot of Saturday morning shows are these days. They're similar to Go-Bots and about three or four other different lines. They are robots you can manipulate into jet planes and automobiles and all kinds of things."

The large number of characters in the *Transformers* series necessitated the hiring on of numerous freelance writers to get the scripts for the required number of episodes done on time.

"We normally would prefer to work with fewer writers," Robbins explains. "If we get a good writer to do a good script for us, we know his or her subsequent scripts will be even better. But we've been under the gun on this one. It's nice to have four or five writers for a series, but on this one we've had to have many more."

"In this case we were required to get out two scripts a week," Malek adds. "Twice as many as usual. We've had to work on several scripts simultaneously and some of our episodes are serialized. when we have a three-parter, it's not easy farming the information out to the person who's writing script 3 when you don't know what's happening with script 1. It can be pretty hectic and it gets very pressured.

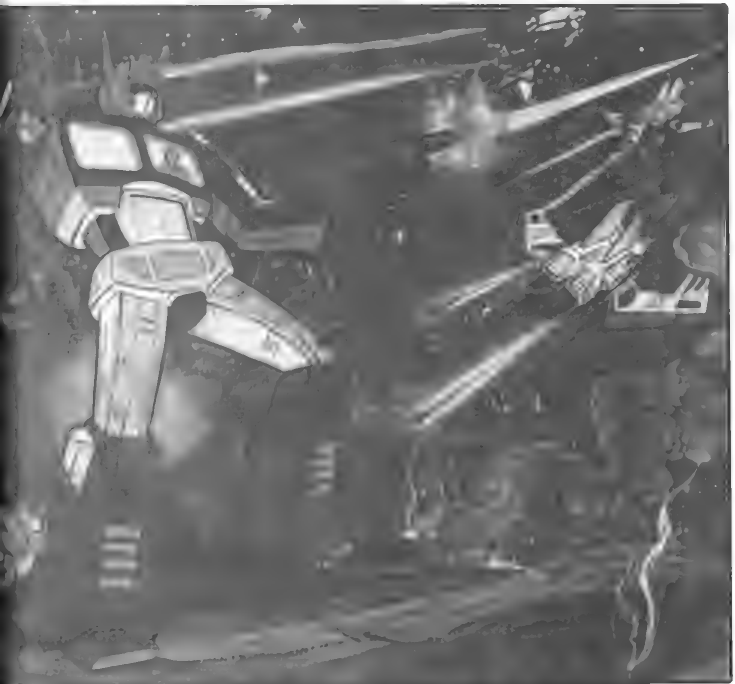
Regardless of the pressure, Robbins and Malek are enjoying working on *Transformers*. Because the show is syndicated, they have much less stringent restrictions on depicting violence and action then they would have if it was a network show. "We can do a lot more," Malek confirms. "The violence is between the robots, so there's nothing that kids can really emulate. You can destroy a robot and then fix him up tomorrow. This show's got laser beams, crashes, explosions...It's real violent and I think boys will love it!"

A script for an animated show is quite unlike one of a live show or a stage production. Robbins describes the extra work that goes into writing cartoons: "You do more script pages. An hour script for live-action will be about half as many pages as a half-hour animation script. That's because we have to describe *everything* that has to be drawn. We have to have long paragraphs, laying out every single thing. I mean, if a character winks, we have to write down 'character winks '. Live-action scripts can go for two or three pages that are all dialogue with hardly any description. They don't call for detail unless it's for a very specific purpose."

"You don't improvise with animation," Malek adds. "You can't just have the actors and the director come in and work it all out together. It has to be planned out and described fully, with a minimum of dialogue and exposition and a maximum of action. A lot of people can't handle that. It's a much more difficult field of writing, and most people will agree with that. And the pay is less."

High tech sci fi and ancient sorcery are utilized by Marvel Productions in creating their animated fantasies!

"During one of the Writer's Guild strikes," Robbins recalls, "all live-action was struck. We're with a different guild, The Cartoonist's Guild, so these Writer's Guild



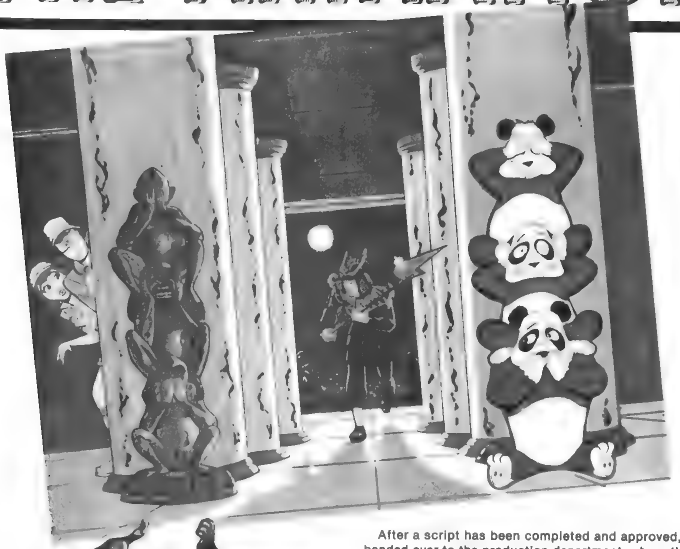
members came to us, looking for work. Well, we started working with a lot of them, and they were horrible! Just have no realization of it. Total rewrites from fade-in to fade-out. They just didn't have the grasp."

Both writers confirmed that they never try to write down to their audiences. Malek spoke of existing in a kind of secret world that none of his peers knew anything about, but that he shared with the millions of kids who watch his shows. Robbins suggested that he probably hadn't gone beyond being eleven or twelve mentally anyway, and that he wrote from the little kid he feels exists inside all of us.

"I enjoy writing for children's television because it's for an appreciative audience," Robbins says. "Personally, and I'm sure that Bryce has gotten the same reaction, when you meet a kid who has seen your show and tells you 'I loved this' or 'I liked that', it's very rewarding."

"This is a great job," Malek adds, "because we get paid to read comic books and play with toys. Geez."

THE ANIMATION



After a script has been completed and approved, it is handed over to the production department, where the arduous process of turning it into a cartoon show is begun. Lee Gunther, Marvel's Vice-President in charge of Production, gives a step by step explanation of the procedure:

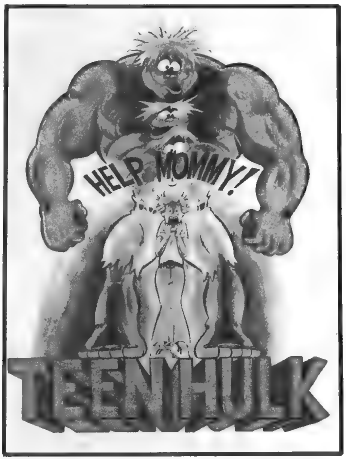
"We manage the flow of the production and see to it that the quality level is kept high. First, we assign the script to a producer, a directory and storyboard people. The producer breaks the script down and hands it out to the various storyboarders, and at the same time turns it over to the model department, where the character models are designed. Usually, the main characters in a series have been designed previously, but for each episode there are always incidental models, props and numerous other thugs that have to be designed. The models are color-keyed.

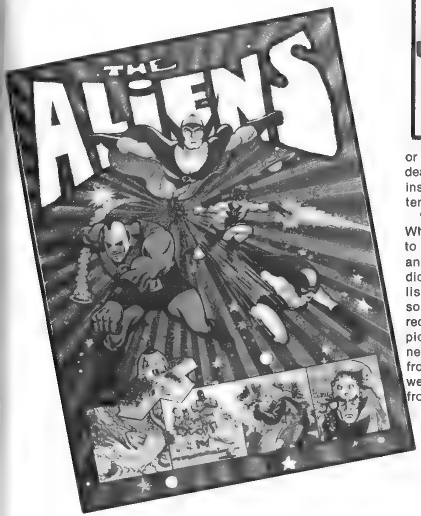
"When the storyboard is completed, we hold auditions for the voices of incidental characters. Normally, the main cast has been chosen beforehand. The dialogue is then recorded and cut together. The storyboard is then slugged, or timed, by one of our directors, and the track is tightened up based on that slugged storyboard. After that, the track goes into track-reading, where the editorial department phonetically reads the dialogue, frame by frame, onto animation exposure sheets.

PROCESS

"As this is occuring, our background design department is in the process of doing background layouts for each sequence in the storyboard. Those are then painted and color-keyed, so that each sequence in the picture blends in with the rest of the show and gets across the correct emotion: If it's a swamp, it should be moody, if it's a desert, barren and foreboding.

"When the exposure sheets come back, the director takes them along with the storyboards and directs the action and cuts the picture into scenes. The description of what is to take place is put down on the sheets. The animation for the dialogue-speaking mouths is exposed. From that point, key animation, or those portions of the animation that we feel we need to do here to see how they're going to work, unfolds. When this is completed, we send it overseas, with at least one director and one animation checker for each series, to have the basic animation done. The people we send to Japan or Belgium





or Korea supervise, answer questions, make changes and deal with animation problems that occur on the spot. This insures that the end product does not take on the characteristics of the country in which it is animated.

"They follow the animation through camera overseas. When the picture is shot, it is assembled and returned to us. We look at it for retakes, mistakes or any problems and we cut the picture down to size for network or syndicate length requirements. We then send back our retake list and the retakes are accomplished. In the meantime, sound effects, music and dialogue are all cut, dubbed and recut. When the retakes come back, we cut them into the picture, go to a sound company for a final mix, cut the negative and order a color print. The average length of time from when a final script is delivered into my hands to when we deliver that finished show to the network is anywhere from twelve to fourteen weeks.

THE PRODUCER'S

Bob Richardson produced the *Dungeons and Dragons* show for Marvel last year, and this season he is providing the same services for *The Muppet Babies* series.

"A producer in animation is a little different than a producer in live-action," Richardson says. "A producer in animation is almost like a director in a sense, except that it's in a wider field. Once a buy is made on a show, the producer supervises everything until it gets on the air, including advertising and publicity.

"A director in animation is basically responsible for the timing of the exposure sheets, which is not something just anybody could do. It takes someone who knows directing and animation to do that. But he really has nothing to do with the development of the show or the storyboards or the script. that's all done through my office.

On *The Muppet Babies*, with the exception of anything that, contractually, Jim Henson and his people are involved with, Richardson has final say on artwork, background keys and anything done at the recording sessions.

"We work with Henson's people as closely as we can. They are very busy, and the time they devote to the show is limited. In the case of *Dungeons and Dragons*, any of the characters we used in the show which Gary Gygaux's company had already designed or had some material on, had to have their looks and so forth approved by them before we could transfer them to animation. I think anybody who owns a property wants to safeguard their original designs."

Naturally, when an outside source's characters are involved, Richardson himself tries to make sure that a show remains true to the original creator's designs. Sometimes, as in the case of doing the voices for the *Muppet Babies*, this can create some bizarre complications.

"What we tried to do was retain the feel of Kermit's and Piggie's and everybody else's voices, but it was real difficult because we had to take these well-known voices and make baby voices out of them. Now, the adult Muppet voices were up in a high, crazy register of the throat to begin with. So we had to try to imitate that, then put it up into an even higher register for the baby version. In addition to that, we have a song in every show, so the voice people had to sing in those double-crazy registers. And the voice talent were not singers! It was a tricky problem, and I think it worked out pretty successfully."

Richardson went on to describe the *Muppet Babies*, with its elaborate mixture of animation styles, integrated live-action footage and combination of fantasy, musical and educational elements, as a wonderful concept and wonderful show to work on, but also as a source of numerous production problems. "It is kind of a dual-edged sword. It's a show that's never been on TV before, particularly on Saturday morning. I've been in the animation business over twenty years, and it is the hardest show I've ever worked on, in any form. I've never had a show this complex.

"But one of the reasons why I've come to Marvel and have stayed with Marvel," Richardson adds, "is that Marvel continues to attempt to do better shows and make more exciting use of the medium than most of the studios in town do. Everyone else seems to do the same thing that's been done continually, over and over again. I think Marvel tries to do something that is maybe another step above average or better. That's the challenge to me."

ARTISTS & ANIMATION

Among the many artists who design characters, backgrounds and storyboards at Marvel Productions are Scott Shaw, Larry Houston and Will Meugniot, all names that should be familiar to comic book fans. I asked each of them to compare working in animation to drawing for comic books.

"I like working in animation, I think, a lot better than comic books," Shaw told me, "and so does my bank. There aren't a lot of egos involved and you can get away from the house. I just about go crazy freelancing at home all the time. You can't hold the artwork up and ask 'How does this look?' or bounce an idea off of somebody.

"Both fields are creatively fulfilling to me because I've always liked doing the funny stuff. I don't draw the adventure stuff, so there's really very little market for me to work in comic books anyway. I wanted to be in animation, I guess, ever since *The Flintstones* came on. The first night they were ever on TV in 1960, I refused to go to my violin lesson. I said, 'Man, this has everything I like, dinosaurs and cartoons and it was made by the same guys who did *Ruff & Reddy*, and I can't wait...'. About a month after the head art director at Hanna-Batbera hired me to work on *The Flintstones*, I became one of the art directors for the show. Since I'd been drawing the Flintstones all my life, it came to me real fast."

"Animation, for me...it really pays my mortgage well," Larry Houston observed, echoing Shaw's assertion. "I like the self-expression in comics, but I can't afford to live on it. I also like the fact that if you own something, like Scott has a piece of his characters in D.C. Comics' *Zoo Crew*, it can help you become financially independent if they're ever merchandised in the future, and that will allow you to do what you really want to do." Besides having inked Shaw's *Captain Carrot and the Zoo Crew*, *All-Star Squadron* and *DNAgents*, Houston published his own fanzine about an Avengers-like group, *The Enforcers*, back in the mid-seventies.

Will Meugniot often finds himself torn between two loves. "It's terrible. The times when I've done either comic books or animation exclusively, I find myself missing whichever one I'm not doing terribly. With comics, the satisfaction is that you do finished art. And with something like *Vanity*, where I'm writing it too and then inking it, I have total control, which is great. It's wonderful for your ego to just do stuff and have nobody disagree with you.

"But with animation, there's something delightful about doing something that you know is going to move. When you've storyboarded or laid out something, then go down-

stairs to editing and see it on a moviola, it's really, really exciting to see what's happened to it after it's gone through the director's hands and the animator's hands. Just seeing the thing in color, moving, kind of larger than life, is real nice."

Of the three artists, Larry Houston has been with Marvel Productions the longest. He worked on the studio's first show, the syndicated *Spider-Man* series, and then continued drawing storyboards for the series when it was picked up by NBC. He is currently a storyboarder for the company's syndicated *G.I. Joe* series. but it was on the *Spider-Man* show that the devious mind of an unrepentent comic book fan really cut loose.

"I'm one of the people who put those little in-gags into the *Spider-Man* shows, like when there are cameo shots of the X-Men or Daredevil. In one episode of the syndicated show, the writer wrote a scene in which Peter Parker came home to watch TV, and on the TV was a soap opera. What I did was change it so that The Avengers, The Vision, Thor and Captain America were fighting some menace on the TV."

It was Will Meugniot who got Houston out of his job as a computer analyst and into animation when Meugniot was a supervisor at Filmation Studios. Meugniot himself came to Marvel when the *Spider-Man* and *Hulk* network shows, for which he did storyboards, were in production. Meugniot also did a considerable amount of development work on *Captain America* and *Iron Man*, two animation proposals that were never picked up.

After taking a few years off to work exclusively in comics, Meugniot is back at Marvel Productions, working on the *G.I. Joe* show and also on animated commercials for the toys that the show is based on. "It was Larry Houston and Rick Hoberg who first told me how wonderful it was to work at Marvel and how neat it was that they were trying to do better product," Meugniot recalls. For the artist, who has worked with such major figures in the animation business as Doug Wildey, Mark Evanier and Tex Avery (with whom he did *The Thing* series, one of Avery's last, for another company), the description of the Marvel operation seems to have been accurate.

Scott Shaw confirms it. "I've been here only a few months, doing storyboards, writing gags and supervising the designs of the characters and props for *The Muppet Babies* show," Shaw said. "It's real nice working here. They have a nice, new building, a lot of my friends are here, Stan Lee comes in every day to play chess so I can heckle him with old titles out of Marvel magazines ('When Titans Clash', 'My Friend, My Foe', 'Lo, This Stan!')."

As if on cue, Stan Lee came through the door of Shaw's office and made a beeline for a table at the end of the room, on which rested the playing board of a slowly progressing game of chess. As Lee scrutinized the game board, thoughtfully working out his next move, Shaw, true to form, began heckling from behind his drawing board.

"Stan trimmed his moustache off, and I decided he did it as a promotion for *The Secret Wars*. 'Stan went off to the Secret Wars and came back...changed. If you want to learn the Secret of Stan's Moustache, read *The Secret Wars!*!"

Laughing with everyone else in the room, Lee made his move, told Shaw he was a funny guy and then headed out the door and down the hall to think over some new ideas.

SPIDER-MAN MOVIE PREVIEW:
CATCHING UP WITH DIRECTOR JOE ZITO

The day is finally approaching for production to begin on **Spider-Man—The Movie**, the first cinematic venture featuring the world's most famous wall crawler.

It is unfortunate that the film's original Christmas release date has been scratched and pushed up to **Easter** of 1987, but this could work out for the best. Hopefully the film will last in theatres for several months, and then segue into the planned summer release of **Superman IV**. Now if only we could get these two guys together in one movie.

Joe Zito is currently prepping **Spider-Man**, scouting locations and beginning the massive search for just the right actor to don the costume. In this brief followup to last issue's interview, he reveals a few more tantalizing details about the film, including the fact that the villain is Doc Ock.

When Zito speaks, one can't help but note the enthusiasm for this project, which is one that he, too (strangely enough), can't wait to see. Christmas may come for most of us in December, but one gets the impression that Zito's real holiday will take place several months later.

JOE ZITO

Conducted by Edward Gross

PART II

Q: How are things going with Spider-Man?

A: Everything is going very very well. We're bringing all of our key staff on to the picture now, and casting is starting next week. We'll be assembling all those people with an intended start of the end of August.

Q: Oh, so it's been delayed from Christmas.

A: Yes, we're expecting the most likely release date to be Easter.

Q: Now that you're a little more in to it, what are your feelings about coming into this Spider-Man movie?

A: I think we're on the verge of a very, very exciting story here. I think that we're about to start something which is a motion picture that I really want to see, and it's rare when you make a movie that you start thinking like a moviegoer. Usually you're thinking of all the technical elements that go in to making the movie and how you're going to accomplish this or that. I'm more caught up in the magic of this movie than any other film that I've ever been around. I feel like we're only days away from having that spider on the side of the wall.

Q: How are you going to make someone like Spider-Man identifiable to the movie audience? I mean Superman was difficult enough, but now you're dealing with a hero who wears a mask, and therefore cuts off that much more identification.

A: But I think Spider-Man is a wonderful character for the audience to identify with, because he's a real kid. He's got the problems of a real person...he's not someone who comes from some other planet, or some extraordinary super hero who's completely different from us. He's a student, and he's got the problems of school, family and dating. And mixed in with all this is the incredible, and rare ability, to be able to stick on the side of buildings, and want to try to save the world. He's torn between these things. He's torn by the same sort of things that tug at us for our attention, but they're much more spectacular which makes him more fun than we are.

Q: Will there be a romantic interest for Spidey?

A: He has the same problems as you and me (both laugh). There is a romantic interest, and it will be someone we know and like.

QQ: Anything you can tell me about the villain yet?

A: (long pause...) Well—tentatively, the villain's Octavius.

Q: Ock!

A: Yes, Doc Ock. He will be the most incredible villain of movies.

Q: Tell me about it.

A: Doc Ock is magical. Visually we'll be able to show things which have never been seen. We'll see his Waldos cartwheeling down midtown Manhattan. We'll see him bugwalking across the city chasing Spidey. We'll see him in combat. It's the most spectacular match of hero and villain that I could think of, and I love hero and villain movies. This has got the best of both. You know in Spider-Man I think there are many things which are an inversion of the Superman story. In the same way that Superman was the real character and Clark Kent his disguise, Spider-Man is flipped around. Peter Parker is the real character and Spider-Man's his disguise. It's sort of an interesting thing, in that when he puts on a suit he becomes someone he's not. When Superman has his suit on, that's who he is. I think that that's fascinating. It's the kind of thing which always fascinated us as kids when we put on a mask or a suit, and tried to become something which was greater than we were; enter a fantasy world which was outside the realm of our real experience. Spider-Man brings me back to those moments. That's a great charm in the project for me.

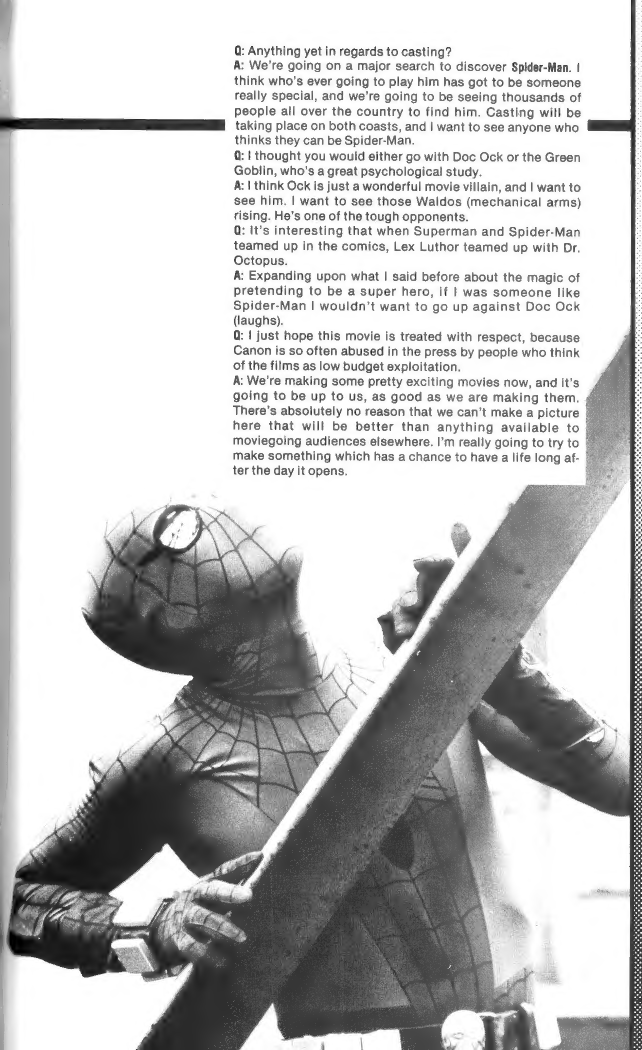
Q: I guess this is the ultimate dream come true for anyone who grew up with that stuff.

A: I think it is that ultimate fantasy, but also, as with all such things, Spider-Man is stuck with the responsibility that comes with it, and it's not just a truly exhilerating experience of being able to bounce from building to building, or being able to swing across the city on webs. On the other side of that coin is a great responsibility he feels, and not really sure what he should do. He's torn between the knowledge that he's got to save the world on the one hand, and on the other he's going to be late for dinner at his aunt's house and she's going to be mad as hell (both laugh).

Q: Will we see him get bashed up a bit, like in the comics?

A: I think audiences will be happy with the fact that it's not just phony hero stuff, and I think you'll feel like it's happening to real people. The action of the picture will be what you would really expect it to be if there was a Spider-Man and Doc Ock.

Q: Anything yet in regards to casting?
A: We're going on a major search to discover **Spider-Man.** I think who's ever going to play him has got to be someone really special, and we're going to be seeing thousands of people all over the country to find him. Casting will be taking place on both coasts, and I want to see anyone who thinks they can be Spider-Man.
Q: I thought you would either go with Doc Ock or the Green Goblin, who's a great psychological study.
A: I think Ock is just a wonderful movie villain, and I want to see him. I want to see those Waldos (mechanical arms) rising. He's one of the tough opponents.
Q: It's interesting that when Superman and Spider-Man teamed up in the comics, Lex Luthor teamed up with Dr. Octopus.
A: Expanding upon what I said before about the magic of pretending to be a super hero, if I was someone like Spider-Man I wouldn't want to go up against Doc Ock (laughs).
Q: I just hope this movie is treated with respect, because Canon is so often abused in the press by people who think of the films as low budget exploitation.
A: We're making some pretty exciting movies now, and it's going to be up to us, as good as we are making them. There's absolutely no reason that we can't make a picture here that will be better than anything available to moviegoing audiences elsewhere. I'm really going to try to make something which has a chance to have a life long after the day it opens.



INTERVIEW

DESIGNED BY ALICE MATEVOSIAN

Superman and Spider-Man are two American folk heroes, as classic in their own way as Robin Hood or William Tell. In fact, when a poll was conducted of the American people, Superman was better known than most of the folk heroes of the Old World and certainly better than our own of an earlier day such as Pecos Bill and Old Stormalong! Though they were originally created for the four color comic book page, both have been reincarnated in virtually every modern medium: comic strips, television and movies.

This book continues the tale of the Web Spinner and the Man of Steel as they made their ventures onto film, both for the small and large screen.

Inside of this volume, you will not only find an episode guide to the television adventures of Superman and the story of how Marvel Productions creates fantastic animation but interviews with everyone from the Newmans, that charming couple that wrote Superman's latest adventures in film, Stan Lee and all the rest of the Marvel animation people, and Joe Zito, the director of the upcoming **Spider-Man: The Movie**.

For the fan of the comic book, television or film medium, we have an invaluable reference, and even the casual reader will find a cornucopia of wonders both old and new!

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